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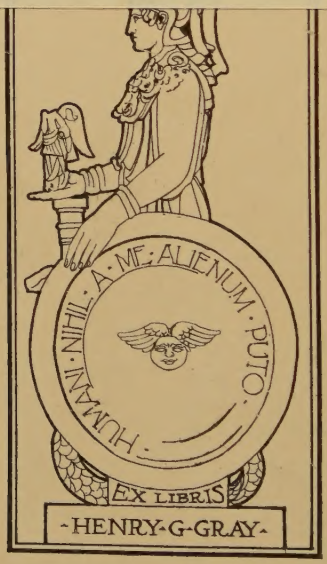

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A POLITICAL HISTORY
OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK

BY

DeALVA STANWOOD ALEXANDER, A.M.

Member of Congress, Formerly United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York

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VOL. II

1833–1861

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A POLITICAL HISTORY
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CHAPTER I

VAN BUREN AND ABOLITION

1833-1837

After Van Buren's inauguration as Vice President, he made Washington his permanent residence, and again became the President's chief adviser. His eye was now intently fixed upon the White House, and the long, rapid strides, encouraged by Jackson, carried him swiftly toward the goal of his ambition. He was surrounded by powerful friends. Edward Livingston, the able and accomplished brother of the Chancellor, still held the office of secretary of state; Benjamin F. Butler, his personal friend and former law partner, was attorney-general; Silas Wright, the successor of Marcy, and Nathaniel P. Tallmadge, the eloquent successor of the amiable Dudley, were in the United States Senate. Among the members of the House, Samuel Beardsley and Churchill C. Cambreling, firm and irrepressible, led the Administration's forces with conspicuous ability. At Albany, Marcy was governor, Charles L. Livingston was speaker of the Assembly, Azariah C. Flagg state comptroller, John A. Dix secretary of state, Abraham Keyser state treasurer, Edwin Croswell state printer and editor of

the *Argus*, and Thomas W. Olcott the able financier of the Regency. All were displaying a devotion to the President, guided by infinite tact, that distinguished them as the organisers and disciplinarians of the party. "I do not believe," wrote Thurlow Weed, "that a stronger political organisation ever existed at any state capital, or even at the national capital. They were men of great ability, great industry, indomitable courage, and strict personal integrity."[1]

John A. Dix seemed destined from the first to leave an abiding mark in history. Very early in life he was distinguished for executive ability. Although but a boy, he saw active service throughout the War of 1812, having been appointed a cadet at fourteen, an ensign at fifteen, and a second lieutenant at sixteen. After the war, he served as aide-de-camp on the staff of General Brown, living at Fortress Monroe and at Washington, until feeble health led to his resignation in 1828. Then he began the practice of law at Cooperstown. In 1830, when Governor Throop made him adjutant-general, he removed to Albany. He was now twenty-six years old, an accomplished writer, a vigorous speaker, and as prompt and bold in his decisions as in 1861, when he struck the high, clear-ringing note for the Union in his order to shoot the first man who attempted to haul down the American flag. He was not afraid of any enterprise; he was not abashed by the stoutest opposition; he was not even depressed by failure. When the call came, he leaped up to sudden political action, and very soon was installed as a member of the Regency.

Dix had one great advantage over most of his contemporaries in political life—he was able to write editorials for the *Argus*. It took a keen pen to find an open way to its columns. Croswell needed assistance in these days of financial quakings and threatened party divisions, but he would accept it only from a master. Until this time, Wright and Marcy had aided him. Their love for variety of subject, characteristic, perhaps, of the gifted writer, presented widely

[1] *Autobiography of Thurlow Weed*, p. 103.

differing themes, flavoured with humour and satire, making the paper attractive if not spectacular. To this work Dix, who had already published a *Sketch of the Resources of the City of New York,* now brought the freshness of a strong personality and the training of a scholar and linguist. He had come into public life under the influence of Calhoun, for whom the army expressed a decided preference in 1828; but he never accepted the South Carolinian's theory of nullification. Dix had inherited loyalty from his father, an officer in the United States army, and he was quick to strike for his country when South Carolina raised the standard of rebellion in 1861.

There was something particularly attractive about John A. Dix in these earlier years. He had endured hardships and encountered dangers, but he had never known poverty; and after his marriage he no longer depended upon the law or upon office for life's necessities. Educated at Phillips Exeter Academy, at the College of Montreal, and at St. Mary's College in Baltimore, he learned to be vigorous without egotism, positive without arrogance, and a man of literary tastes without affectation. Even long years of earnest controversy and intense feeling never changed the serene purity of his life, his lofty purposes, or the nobility of his nature. It is doubtful if he would have found distinction in the career of a man of letters, to which he was inclined. He had the learning and the scholarly ambition. Like Benjamin F. Butler, he could not be content with a small measure of knowledge. He studied languages closely, he read much of the world's literature in the original, and he could write on political topics with the firm grasp and profound knowledge of a statesman of broad views; but he could not, or did not, turn his English into the realm of literature. Yet his *Winter in Madeira and a Summer in Spain and Florence,* published in 1850, ran through five editions in three years, and is not without interest to-day, after so many others, with defter pen, perhaps, have written of these sunny lands. His appointment as secretary of state in 1833 made him also

state superintendent of common schools, and his valuable reports, published during the seven years he filled the office, attest his intelligent devotion to the educational interests of New York, not less than his editorial work on the *Argus* showed his loyal attachment to Van Buren.

But, despite the backing of President Jackson, and the influence of other powerful friends, there was no crying demand outside of New York for Van Buren's election to the Presidency. He had done nothing to stir the hearts of his countrymen with pride, or to create a pronounced, determined public sentiment in his behalf. On the contrary, his weaknesses were as well understood without New York as within it. David Crockett, in his life of Van Buren, speaks of him as "secret, sly, selfish, cold, calculating, distrustful, treacherous," and "as opposite to Jackson as dung is to a diamond." Crockett's book, written for campaign effect, was as scurrilous as it was interesting, but it proved that the country fully understood the character of Van Buren, and that, unlike Jackson, he had no great, redeeming, iron-willed quality that fascinates the multitude. Tennessee, the home State of Jackson, opposed him with bitterness; Virginia declared that it favoured principles, not men, and that in supporting Van Buren it had gone as far astray as it would go; Calhoun spoke of the Van Buren party as "a powerful faction, held together by the hopes of plunder, and marching under a banner whereon is written 'to the victors belong the spoils.'" Everywhere there seemed to be unkindness, unrest, or indifference.

Nevertheless, Van Buren's candidacy had been so persistently and systematically worked up by the President that, from the moment of his inauguration as Vice President, his succession to the Presidency was accepted as inevitable. It is doubtful if a man ever slipped into an office more easily than Martin Van Buren secured the Presidency. That there might be no failure at the last moment, a national democratic convention, the second one in the history of the party, was called to nominate him at Baltimore, in May, 1835, eight-

een months before the election. When the time came, South Carolina, Alabama, and Illinois were unrepresented; Tennessee had one delegate, and Mississippi and Missouri only two each; but Van Buren's nomination followed with an ease and a unanimity that caused a smile even among the office-holding delegates.

Indeed, slavery was the only thing in sight to disturb Van Buren. At present, it was not larger than a cloud "like a man's hand," but the agitation had begun seriously to disturb politicians. After the North had emerged from the Missouri struggle, chafed and mortified by the treachery of its own representatives, the rapidly expanding culture of cotton, which found its way in plenty to northern seaports, had apparently silenced all opposition. A few people, however, had been greatly disturbed by the arguments of a small number of reformers, much in advance of their time, who were making a crusade against the whole system of domestic slavery. Some of these men won honoured names in our history. One of them was Benjamin Lundy. In 1815, when twenty-six years old, Lundy organised an anti-slavery association, known as the "Union Humane Society," and, in its support, he had traversed the country from Maine to Tennessee, lecturing, editing papers, and forming auxiliary societies. He was a small, deaf, unassuming Quaker, without wealth, eloquence, or marked ability; but he had courage, tremendous energy, and a gentle spirit. He had lived for a time in Wheeling, Virginia, where the horrors, inseparable from slavery, impressed him very much as the system in the British West Indies had impressed Zachary Macaulay, father of the distinguished essayist and historian; and, like Macaulay, he ever after devoted his time and his abilities to the generous task of rousing his countrymen to a full sense of the cruelties practised upon slaves.

In 1828, he happened to meet William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison's attention had not previously been drawn to the slavery question, but, when he heard Lundy's arguments, he joined him in Baltimore, demanding, in the first issue of

The Genius, immediate emancipation as the right of the slave and the duty of the master. William Lloyd Garrison was young then, not yet twenty-three years of age, but he struck hard, and soon found himself in jail, in default of the payment of fifty dollars fine and costs for malicious libel. At the end of forty-nine days, Arthur Tappan, of New York City, paid the fine, and Garrison, returning to Boston, issued the first number of *The Liberator* on January 1, 1830.

This opened the agitation in earnest. Garrison treated slavery as a crime, repudiating all creeds, churches, and parties which taught or accepted the doctrine that an innocent human being, however black or down-trodden, was not the equal of every other and entitled to the same inalienable rights. The South soon heard of him, and the Georgia Legislature passed an act offering a reward of five thousand dollars for his delivery into that State. Indictments of northern men by southern grand juries now became of frequent occurrence, one governor making requisition upon Governor Marcy for the surrender of Arthur Tappan, although Tappan had never been in a Southern State. The South, finding that long-distance threats, indictments, and offers of reward accomplished nothing, waked into action its northern sympathisers, who appealed with confidence to riot and mob violence. In New York City, the crusade opened in October, 1833, a mob preventing the organisation of an anti-slavery society at Clinton Hall. Subsequently, on July 4, 1834, an anti-slavery celebration in Chatham Street chapel was broken up, and five days later, the residence of Lewis Tappan was forced open and the furniture destroyed. These outrages were followed by the destruction of churches, the dismantling of schoolhouses, and the looting of dwellings, owned or used by coloured people. In October, 1835, a committee of respectable citizens of Utica, headed by Samuel Beardsley, then a congressman and later chief justice of the State, broke up a meeting called to organise a state anti-slavery society, and destroyed the printing press of a democratic journal which had spoken kindly

of Abolitionists. The agitators, however, were in no wise dismayed or disheartened. It would have taken a good deal of persecution to frighten Beriah Green, or to confuse the conscience of Arthur Tappan.

In the midst of such scenes came tidings that slavery had been abolished in the British West Indies, and that the Utica indignity had been signalised by the conversion of Gerrit Smith. Theretofore, Smith had been a leading colonisationist—thereafter he was to devote himself to the principles of abolitionism. Gerrit Smith, from his earliest years, had given evidence of precocious and extraordinary intelligence. Thurlow Weed pronounced him "the handsomest, the most attractive, and the most intellectual young man I ever met." Smith was then seventeen years old—a student in Hamilton College. "He dressed *à la* Byron," continues Weed, "and in taste and manners was instinctively perfect."[2] His father was Peter Smith, famous in his day as one of the largest landowners in the United States; and, although this enormous estate was left the son in his young manhood, it neither changed his simple, gentle manners, nor the purpose of his noble life.[3] By profession, Gerrit Smith was a philanthropist, and in his young enthusiasm he joined the American Colonisation Society, organised in 1817, for the purpose of settling the western coast of Africa with emancipated blacks. It was a pre-eminently respectable association. Henry Clay was its president, and prominent men North and South, in church and in state, approved its purpose and its methods.

[2] *Autobiography of Thurlow Weed*, p. 31.

[3] "Many years ago I was riding with Gerrit Smith in northern New York. He suddenly stopped the carriage, and, looking around for a few minutes, said: 'We are now on some of my poor land, familiarly known as the John Brown tract;' and he then added, 'I own eight hundred thousand acres, of which this is a part, and all in one piece.' Everybody knows that his father purchased the most of it at sales by the comptrollers of state for unpaid taxes. He said he owned land in fifty-six of the sixty counties in New York. He was also a landlord in other States."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 189.

In 1820 it purchased Sherbro Island; but finding the location unfortunate, other lands were secured in the following year at Cape Mesurado, and about a thousand emigrants sent thither during the next seven years. Gerrit Smith, however, found the movement too slow, if not practically stranded, by the work of the cotton-gin and the doctrine of Calhoun, that "the negro is better off in slavery at the South than in freedom elsewhere." So, in 1830, he left the society to those whose consciences condemned slavery, but whose conservatism restrained them from offensive activity. The society drifted along until 1847, when the colony, then numbering six or seven thousand, declared itself an independent republic under the name of Liberia. In the meantime, Smith, unaided and alone, had provided homes in northern States, on farms of fifty acres each, for twice as many emancipated blacks, his gifts aggregating over two hundred thousand acres.

Gerrit Smith's conversion to abolitionism helped the anti-slavery cause, much as the conversion of St. Paul benefited the Christian church. He brought youth, courage, enthusiasm, wealth, and marked ability. Although alienated from him for years because of his peculiar creed, Thurlow Weed refers in loving remembrance to "his great intellect, genial nature, and ample fortune, which were devoted to all good works." When the people of Utica, his native town, broke up the meeting called to form a state anti-slavery society, Smith promptly invited its projectors to his home at Peterborough, Madison County, where the organisation was completed. He was thirty-three years old then, and from that day until Lincoln's proclamation and Lee's surrender freed the negro, he never ceased to work for the abolition of slavery. The state organisation, nourished under his fostering care, led to greater activity. Anti-slavery societies began to form in every county and in most of the towns of some counties. Abolitionism did not take the place of anti-Masonry, which was now rapidly on the wane; but it awakened the conscience, setting people to thinking and, then, to talk-

ing. The great contest to abolish slavery in the British West Indies, led by the Buxtons, the Wilberforces, and the Whitbreads, had aroused public indignation in the United States, as well as in England, by the overwhelming proofs that men and women were being constantly flogged; and that branding female slaves on the breast with red-hot iron, was used as a means of punishment, as well as of identification. Other more revolting evidences of the horrors, which seemed to be the inevitable accompaniment of the slave system, found lodgment in American homes through the eloquence of the noted English abolition lecturer, George Thompson, then in this country; until the cruelties, characterising slavery in Jamaica, were supposed and believed by many to be practised in the Southern States.

Naturally enough, the principal avenue between the promoter of anti-slavery views and the voter was the United States mails, and these were freighted with abolition documents. It is likely that Harrison Gray Otis, the wealthy and aristocratic mayor of Boston, did not exaggerate when he advised the southern magistrate, who desired the suppression of Garrison's *Liberator,* that "its office was an obscure hole, its editor's only visible auxiliary a negro boy, and his supporters a few insignificant persons of all colours;"[4] but the Southerners knew that from that "obscure hole" issued a paper of uncompromising spirit, which was profoundly impressing the people of the United States, and their journals and orators teemed with denunciations. The Richmond *Whig* characterised Abolitionists as "hell-hounds," warning the northern merchants that unless these fanatics were hung they would lose the benefit of southern trade. A Charleston paper threatened to cut out and "cast upon the dunghill" the tongue of any one who should lecture upon the evils or immorality of slavery. The Augusta *Chronicle* declared that if the question be longer discussed the Southern States would secede and settle the matter by the sword, as the only possible means of self-preservation. A prominent Alabama

[4] Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict,* Vol. 1, p. 122, *note.*

clergyman advised hanging every man who favoured emancipation, and the Virginia Legislature called upon the non-slave-holding States to suppress abolition associations by penal statutes.

In the midst of such sentiments, it was evident to Van Buren, whose election depended upon the Southern States, that something definite must be done, and that nothing would be considered definite by the South which did not aim at the total abolition of the anti-slavery agitator. Accordingly, his friends held meetings in every county in the State, adopting resolutions denouncing them as "fanatics and traitors to their country," and indorsing Van Buren "as a patriot opposed to the hellish abolition factions and all their heresies." Van Buren himself arranged for the great meeting at Albany at which Governor Marcy presided. "I send you the inclosed proceedings of the citizens of Albany," wrote Van Buren to the governor of Georgia, "and I authorise you to say that I concur fully in the sentiments they advance."

In commenting upon the Albany meeting, Thurlow Weed, with the foresight of a prophet, wrote in the *Evening Journal:* "This question of slavery, when it becomes a matter of political controversy, will shake, if not unsettle, the foundations of our government. It is too fearful, and too mighty, in all its bearings and consequences, to be recklessly mixed up in our partisan conflicts."[5] When the Legislature convened, in January, 1836, Governor Marcy took up the question in his message. "I cannot doubt," he said, "that the Legislature possesses the power to pass such penal laws as will have the effect of preventing the citizens of this State, and residents within it, from availing themselves, with impunity, of the protection of its sovereignty and laws, while they are actually employed in exciting insurrection and sedition in a sister State, or engaged in treasonable enterprises, intending to be executed therein."[6] Not content with this

[5] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 319.

[6] *Governors' Messages*, January 5, 1836.

show of loyalty to the South on the part of his friends, Van Buren secured the support of Silas Wright and Nathaniel P. Tallmadge for the bill, then pending in the United States Senate, prohibiting postmasters from knowingly transmitting or delivering any documents or papers relating to the abolition of slavery, and when the measure, on a motion for engrossment, received a tie vote, Van Buren cast the decisive vote in the affirmative.[7]

Van Buren's prompt action gave him the confidence and support of three-fourths of the slave-holding States, without losing his hold upon the Democracy of the free States. Indeed, there was nothing new that the Whigs could oppose to Van Buren. They were not ready to take the anti-slavery side of the issue, and questions growing out of the bank controversy had practically been settled in 1832. This, therefore, was the situation when the two parties in New York assembled in convention, in September, 1836, to nominate state candidates. Marcy and John Tracy were without opposition. From the first moment he began to administer the affairs of the State, Marcy must have felt that he had found his work at last.

The Whigs were far from being united. Henry Clay's disinclination to become a nominee for President resulted in two Whig candidates, Hugh L. White of Tennessee, the favourite of the southern Whigs, and William Henry Harrison, preferred by the Eastern, Middle, and Western States. This weakness was soon reflected in New York. Thurlow Weed was full of forebodings, and William H. Seward found his

[7] "When the bill came to a vote in the Senate, although there was really a substantial majority against it, a tie was skilfully arranged to compel Van Buren, as Vice President, to give the casting vote. White, the Southern Democratic candidate so seriously menacing him, was in the Senate, and voted for the bill. Van Buren must, it was supposed, offend the pro-slavery men by voting against the bill, or offend the North and perhaps bruise his conscience by voting for it. When the roll was being called, Van Buren, so Benton tells us, was out of the chair, walking behind the colonnade at the rear of the Vice President's seat. Calhoun, fearful lest he might

law office more satisfactory than a candidate's berth. Like Clay he was perfectly willing another should bear the burden of inevitable defeat. So the Whigs put up Jesse Buel for governor, Gamaliel H. Barstow for lieutenant-governor, and an electoral ticket favourable to Harrison.

Jesse Buel was not a brilliant man. He was neither a thinker, like Seward, nor an orator, like Granger; but he was wise, wealthy, and eminently respectable, with enough of the statesman in him to be able to accept established facts and not to argue with the inexorable. Years before, he had founded the Albany *Argus*, editing it with ability and great success. Through its influence he became state printer, succeeding Solomon Southwick, after the latter's quarrel with Governor Tompkins over the Bank of America. This was in 1813. Three years later Thurlow Weed, then a young man of nineteen, worked for him as a journeyman printer. "From January till April," he writes, "I uniformly reached the office before daylight, and seldom failed to find Mr. Buel at his case, setting type by a tallow candle and smoking a long pipe." Buel made so much money that the party managers invited him to let others, equally deserving, have a turn at the state printing. So he went into the Assembly, distinguishing himself as an able, practical legislator. But he gradually drew away from the Democrats, as their financial policy became more pronounced; and upon the organisation of the Whig party gave it his support. Had he chosen he might have been its candidate for governor in 1834; and it is difficult to un-

escape the ordeal, eagerly asked where he was, and told the sergeant-at-arms to look for him. But Van Buren was ready, and at once stepped to his chair and voted for the bill. His close friend, Silas Wright of New York, also voted for it. Benton says he deemed both the votes to be political and given from policy. So they probably were. . . . Van Buren never deserved to be called a 'Northern man with Southern principles.' But this vote came nearer to an excuse for the epithet than did any other act of his career." —Edward M. Shepard, *Life of Martin Van Buren*, p. 277.

derstand why he should have accepted, in 1836, with little expectation of an election, what he declined two years before when success seemed probable.

Gamaliel H. Barstow had been a Clintonian and an anti-Clintonian, a follower and a pursuer of Van Buren, an Adams man and an Anti-Mason—everything, in fact, except a Federalist. But, under whatever standard he fought, and in whatever body he sat, he was a recognised leader, full of spirit, fire, and force. In 1824, he had stood with James Tallmadge and Henry Wheaton at the head of the Adams party; in 1831, he had accompanied John C. Spencer and William H. Seward to the national anti-masonic convention at Baltimore; and, in the long, exciting debate upon the bill giving the people power to choose presidential electors, he exhibited the consummate shrewdness and sagacity of an experienced legislator. There was nothing sinister or vindictive about him; but he had an unsparing tongue, and he delighted to indulge it. This is what he did in 1836. Having turned his back upon the Democratic party, the campaign to him became an occasion for contrasting the past and "its blighting Regency majorities" with the future of a new party, which, no doubt, seemed to him and to others purer and brighter, since the longer it was excluded from power the less opportunity it had for making mistakes.

But 1836 was a year of great prosperity. The undue depression of 1835 was now succeeded by commercial activity and an era of expansion and inflation. Visionary schemes were everywhere present. Real estate values doubled, farms were platted into village lots, wild lands were turned into farms, and a new impulse was given to legitimate and illegitimate enterprises. Stocks rose, labour went up, farm products sold at higher prices, and the whole country responded to the advantages of the money plethora. Democracy rode on the crest of the wave, and Jackson's financial policy was accepted with joy.

Nevertheless the Whig party, hoping to strengthen its numbers in Congress, did not relax its zeal. When the vote,

however, revealed nearly thirty thousand majority for Marcy[8] and the Van Buren electoral ticket, with ninety-four Democrats in the Assembly and only one Whig in the Senate, it made Thurlow Weed despair for the Republic.

[8] William L. Marcy, 166,122; Jesse Buel, 136,648.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

CHAPTER II

SEWARD ELECTED GOVERNOR

1836-1838

The overwhelming defeat of the Whigs, in 1836, left a single rift in the dark cloud through which gleamed a ray of substantial hope. It was plain to the most cautious business man that if banking had been highly remunerative, with the United States Bank controlling government deposits, it must become more productive after Jackson had transferred these deposits to state institutions; and what was plain to the conservative banker, was equally patent to the reckless speculator. The legislatures of 1834 and 1835, therefore, became noted as well as notorious for the large number of bank charters granted. As the months passed, increased demands for liberal loans created an increasing demand for additional banks, and the greater the demand the greater the strife for charters. Under the restraining law of the State, abundant provision had been made for a fair distribution of bank stocks; but the dominant party, quick to take an advantage helpful to its friends, carefully selected commissioners who would distribute it only among their political followers. At first it went to merchants or capitalists in the locality of the bank; but gradually, Albany politicians began to participate, and then, prominent state officers, judges, legislators and their relatives and confidential friends, many of whom resold the stock at a premium of twenty to twenty-five per cent. before the first payment had been made. Thus, the distribution of stock became a public scandal, deplored in the messages of the Governor and assailed by the press. "The unclean drippings of venal legislation," the New York *Evening Post* called it. But no remedy was applied. The Gover-

nor, in spite of his regrets, signed every charter the Legislature granted, and the commissioners, as if ignorant of the provisions to secure a fair distribution of the stock, continued to evade the law with boldness and great facility.

Members of the Democratic party in New York City, who believed that banking, like any other business, ought to be open to competition, had organised an equal rights party in 1834 to oppose all monopolies, and the bank restraining law in particular. Several meetings were held during the summer. Finally, in October, both factions of Tammany Hall attempted forcibly to control its proceedings, and, in the contest, the lights were extinguished. The Equal Righters promptly relighted them with loco-foco or friction matches and continued the meeting. From this circumstance they were called Locofocos, a name which the Whigs soon applied to the whole Democratic party.

The Equal Rights party was not long-lived. Two years spanned its activity, and four or five thousand votes measured its strength; but, while it lasted, it was earnest and the exponent of good principles. In 1836, these people held a state convention at Utica, issued a declaration of principles, and nominated a state and congressional ticket. In New York City, the centre of their activity, Frederick A. Tallmadge was put up for state senator and Edward Curtis for Congress, two reputable Whigs; and, to aid them, the Whig party fused successfully with the Equal Righters, electing their whole ticket. This victory was the one ray of hope that came to the Whigs out of the contest of 1836. It proved that some people were uneasy and resentful.

But other Whig victories were soon to follow. Reference has already been made to the unprecedented prosperity that characterised the year 1836. This era of expansion and speculative enterprises, which began with the transfer of government deposits, continued at high pressure under the influence of the newly chartered banks. With such a money plethora, schemes and projects expanded and inflated, until success seemed to turn the heads of the whole population. So

wild was the passion for new enterprises, that one had only to announce a scheme to find people ready to take shares in it. Two per cent. a month did not deter borrowers who expected to make one hundred per cent. before the end of the year. In vain did the Governor inveigh against this "unregulated spirit of speculation." As the year advanced, men grew more reckless, until stocks and shares were quickly purchased at any price without the slightest care as to the risk taken.

The beginning of the end of this epoch of insane speculation was felt, early in the spring of 1837, by a money pressure of unexampled severity. Scarcely had its effect reached the interior counties, before every bank in the country suspended specie payments. Then confidence gave way, and tens of thousands of people, who had been wealthy or in comfortable circumstances, waked up to the awful realisation of their bankruptcy and ruin. The panic of 1837 reached the proportions of a national calamity. Most men did not then know the reason for the crash, and the knowledge of those who did, brought little comfort. But, gradually, the country recognised that the prosperity of a nation is not increased in proportion to the quantity of paper money issued, unless such currency be maintained at its full value, convertible, at pleasure, into hard cash—the money standard of the world.

It so happened that the Legislature had not adjourned when the crash came, and, without a moment's delay, it suspended for one year the section of the Safety Fund act forbidding banks to issue notes after refusing to pay them in coin on demand; but it refused to suspend the act, passed in March, 1835, prohibiting the issue or circulation of bills under the denomination of five dollars. This left the people without small bills, and, as New York banks dared not issue them, necessity forced into circulation foreign bills, issued by solvent and insolvent banks, the losses from which fell largely upon the poorer classes who could not discriminate between the genuine and the spurious. So great was the in-

convenience and loss suffered by the continuance of this act, that the people petitioned the Governor to call an extra session of the Legislature for its repeal; but Marcy declined, for the reason that the Legislature had already refused to give the banks the desired authority. Thus, the citizens of New York, staggering under a panic common to the whole country, were compelled to suffer the additional hardships of an irredeemable, and, for the most part, worthless currency, known as "shin-plasters."

In the midst of these "hard times," occurred the election in November, 1837. The New York municipal election, held in the preceding spring and resulting, with the help of the Equal Righters, in the choice of a Whig mayor, had prepared the way for a surprise; yet no one imagined that a political revolution was imminent. But the suffering people were angry, and, like a whirlwind, the Whigs swept nearly every county in the State. Of one hundred and twenty-eight assemblymen, they elected one hundred and one, and six of the eight senators. It happened, too, that as the triennial election of sheriffs and clerks occurred this year, the choice of these officers swelled the triumph into a victory that made it the harder to overthrow. In a moment, the election of 1837 had given the Whigs a powerful leverage in local contests, enabling them to build up a party that could be disciplined as well as organised. To add to their strength, the Legislature, when it convened, in January, 1838, proceeded to take the "spoils." Luther Bradish was chosen speaker, Orville L. Holley surveyor-general, and Gamaliel L. Barstow state treasurer. It also suspended for two years the act prohibiting banks from issuing small bills, passed a general banking law, and almost unanimously voted four millions for enlarging the Erie canal.

Although the spring elections of 1838 showed a decided falling off in the Whig vote, hopes of carrying the State in November were so well founded that Whig candidates for governor appeared in plenty. Looking back upon the contest from a distance, especially with the present knowledge

of his superlative fitness for high place, it seems strange that William H. Seward should not have had an open way in the convention. But Francis Granger had also won the admiration of his party by twice leading a forlorn hope. Amidst crushing defeat he had never shown weariness, and his happy disposition kept him in friendly touch with his party. The Chenango people were especially ardent in his support. Twice he had forced their canal project through a hostile Assembly, and they did not forget that, in the hour of triumph, Seward opposed it. Besides, Granger had distinguished himself in Congress, resisting the policy of Jackson and Van Buren with forceful argument and ready tact. He was certainly a man to be proud of, and his admirers insisted with great pertinacity that he should now be the nominee for governor.

There was another formidable candidate in the field. Luther Bradish had proved an unusually able speaker, courteous in deportment, and firm and resolute in his rulings at a time of considerable political excitement. He had entered the Assembly from Franklin in 1828, and, having early embraced anti-Masonry with Weed, Granger, and Seward, was, with them, a leader in the organisation of the Whig party. The northern counties insisted that his freedom from party controversies made him peculiarly available, and, while the supporters of other candidates were quarrelling, it was their intention, if possible, to nominate him. Seward and Granger were eager for the nomination, but neither seems to have encouraged the ill-will which their followers exhibited. Indeed, Seward evidenced a disposition to withdraw; and he would doubtless have done so, had not his friends, and those of Granger, thought it better to let a convention decide. As the campaign grew older, the canvass proceeded with asperity. Granger's adherents accused Seward of an unjust conspiracy to destroy him, and of having canvassed the State, personally or by agents, to secure the prize even at the cost of a party division. They charged him with oppressing the settlers in Chautauqua, with editing the Albany *Journal*, with regulat-

ing the Bank of the United States, and controlling the movements of Henry Clay. "I am already so wearied of it," Seward wrote, "that, if left to myself, I should withdraw instantly and forever. I am ill-fitted for competition with brethren and friends. But with a clear conscience and greater magnanimity than there is manifested toward me, I shall go safely through all this storm."[1]

The confidence disclosed in the closing sentence was due largely to his confidence in Thurlow Weed. The editor of the Albany *Journal* seriously desired to take no part in the choice of delegates, since his personal and political relations with all the candidates were intimate and confidential; but he had known Granger longer than the others, and, if controlled by personal friendship, he must have favoured the Ontario candidate. Weed, however, believed that Seward's nomination would awaken greater enthusiasm, especially among young men, thus giving the ticket its best chance of success. At the last moment, therefore, he declared in favour of the Auburn statesman.

The sequel showed that his help came none too soon. Four informal ballots were taken, and, on the following day the formal and final one. The first gave Seward 52, Granger 39, and Bradish 29, with 4 for Edwards of New York. This was supposed to be Granger's limit. On the second ballot, Bradish's friends transferred thirteen votes to him, making Seward 60, Granger 52, Bradish 10, and Edwards 3. If this was a surprise to the friends of Seward, the third ballot was a tremendous shock, for Seward fell off to 59, and Granger got 60. Bradish had 8. Then Weed went to work. Though he had understood that Granger, except in a few counties, had little strength, the last ballot plainly showed him to be the popular candidate; and during an intermission between the third and fourth ballots, the *Journal's* editor exhibited an influence few men in the State have ever exercised. The convention was made up of the strongest and most independent men in the party. Nearly all had held seats in

[1] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 366.

the state or national legislature, or had occupied other important office. Experience had taught them to act upon their own convictions. The delegates interested in the Chenango Valley canal were especially obstinate and formidable. "Weed," said one of them, "tell me to do anything else; tell me to jump out of the window and break my neck, and I will do it to oblige you; but don't ask me to desert Granger!"[2] Yet the quiet, good-natured Weed, his hand softly purring the knee of his listener as he talked—never excited, never vehement, but sympathetic, logical, prophetic—had his way. The fourth ballot gave Seward 67, Granger 48, Bradish 8. The work was done. When the convention reassembled the next morning, on motion of a warm supporter of Granger, the nomination was made unanimous, and Bradish was named for lieutenant-governor by acclamation.

Much disappointment was exhibited by Granger's friends, especially the old anti-Mason farmers who were inclined to reproach Weed with disloyalty. Granger himself stoically accepted defeat and zealously supported the ticket. He had said to a departing delegate, "if either Mr. Seward or Mr. Bradish attain a majority at the informal ballot, my friends must give the successful competitor their united support."[3] How heartily Seward would have responded under like circumstances is evidenced by his action when a premature report went forth of Granger's selection. Being informed of it, Seward at once told his friends that Auburn must be the first to ratify, and immediately set to work preparing resolutions for the meeting.

Thurlow Weed was pre-eminently a practical politician. He believed in taking advantage of every opportunity to strengthen his own party and weaken the adversary, and he troubled himself little about the means employed. He preferred to continue the want of small bills for another year rather than allow the opposite party to benefit by a repeal of the obnoxious law; he approved Van Buren's course in the

[2] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 373.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 374.

infamous Fellows-Allen controversy; and, had he been governor in place of John Jay in 1800, the existing Legislature would undoubtedly have been reconvened in extra session, and presidential electors chosen favourable to his own party, as Hamilton wanted. But, at the bottom of his nature, there was bed-rock principle from which no pressure could swerve him. He could exclaim with Emerson, "I will say those things which I have meditated for their own sake and not for the first time with a view to that occasion." In these words is the secret of his relation to the Whig party. He asked no office, and he gave only the ripe fruit of his meditative life. It is not to be supposed that, in 1838, he saw in the young man at Auburn the astute United States Senator of the fifties; or the still greater secretary of state of the Civil War; but he had seen enough of Seward to discern the qualities of mind and heart that lifted him onto heights which extended his horizon beyond that of most men, enabling him to keep his bearing in the midst of great excitement, and, finally, in the presence of war itself. Seward saw fewer things, perhaps, than the more active and eloquent Granger, but Weed knew that he saw more deeply.[4]

The Democratic state convention assembled at Herkimer on September 12, and unanimously renominated William L.

[4] "Apart from politics, I liked Seward, though not blind to his faults. His natural instincts were humane and progressive. He hated slavery and all its belongings, though a seeming necessity constrained him to write, in 1838, to this intensely pro-slavery city, a pro-slavery letter, which was at war with his real, or at least with his subsequent convictions. Though of Democratic parentage, he had been an Adams man, an anti-Mason, and was now thoroughly a Whig. The policy of more extensive and vigorous internal improvement had no more zealous champion. By nature, genial and averse to pomp, ceremony, and formality, few public men of his early prime were better calculated to attract and fascinate young men of his own party, and holding views accordant on most points with his. . . . Weed was of coarser mould and fibre than Seward—tall, robust, dark-featured, shrewd, resolute, and not over-scrupulous—keen-sighted, though not far-seeing."—Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life*, pp. 311, 312.

Marcy and John Tracy. Marcy had made an able governor for three consecutive terms. His declaration that "to the victors belong the spoils" had not impaired his influence, since all parties practised, if they did not preach it; and, although he stultified himself by practically recommending and finally approving the construction of the Chenango canal, which he bitterly opposed as comptroller, he had lost no friends. Canal building was in accord with the spirit of the times. A year later, he had recommended an enlargement of the Erie canal; but when he discovered that the Chenango project would cost two millions instead of one, and the Erie enlargement twelve millions instead of six, he protested against further improvements until the Legislature provided means for paying interest on the money already borrowed. He clearly saw that the "unregulated spirit of speculation" would lead to ruin; and, to counteract it, he appealed to the Legislature, seeking to influence the distribution of bank stock along lines set forth in the law. But Marcy failed to enforce his precepts with the veto. In refusing, also, to reassemble the Legislature, for the repeal of the Small Bills act, the passage of which he had recommended in 1835, he gave the *Evening Post* opportunity to assail him as "a weak, cringing, indecisive man, the mere tool of a monopoly junto—their convenient instrument."

Marcy held office under difficult conditions. The panic, coming in the summer of 1837, was enough to shatter the nerves of any executive; but, to the panic, was now added the Canadian rebellion which occurred in the autumn of 1837. Though not much of a rebellion, William L. McKenzie's appeal for aid to the friends of liberty aroused hundreds of sympathetic Americans living along the border. Navy Island, above the Falls of Niagara, was made the headquarters of a provisional government, from which McKenzie issued a proclamation offering a reward for the capture of the governor-general of Canada and promising three hundred acres of land to each recruit.

The Canadian authorities effectually guarded the border,

and destroyed the *Caroline,* presumably an insurgent steamer, lying at Schlosser's dock on the American side. In the conflict, one member of the crew was killed, and several wounded. The steamer proved to be an American vessel, owned by New York parties, and its destruction greatly increased the indignation against Canada; but Governor Marcy did not hesitate to call upon the people to refrain from unlawful acts within the territory of the United States; and, to enforce his proclamation, supplied General Scott, now in command of the Candian frontier, with a force of militia. The American troops quickly forced the abandonment of Navy Island, scattered the insurgents and their allies to secret retreats, and broke up the guerrilla warfare. The loss of life among the patriots, due to their audacity and incompetent leadership, was considerable, and the treatment of prisoners harsh and in some instances inhuman. Many young men of intelligence and character were banished for life to Van Dieman's Land, McKenzie was thrown into a Canadian dungeon, and, among others, Van Schoulty, a brave young officer and refugee from Poland, who led an unsuccessful attack upon Prescott, was executed. Small as was the uprising, it created an intense dislike of Marcy among the friends of those who participated in it.

Still another political splinter was festering in Marcy's side. Several leading Democrats, who had sustained Jackson in his war upon the United States Bank, and in his removal of the deposits, refused to adopt Van Buren's sub-treasury scheme, proposed to the extra session of Congress, convened in September, 1837. This measure meant the disuse of banks as fiscal agents of the government, and the collection, safe-keeping, and disbursement of public moneys by treasury officials. The banks, of course, opposed it; and thousands who had shouted, "Down with the United States Bank," changed their cry to "Down with Van Buren and the sub-treasury scheme." Among those opposing it, in New York, Nathaniel P. Tallmadge, a Democratic United States senator, took the lead, calling a state convention to meet at Syracuse. This

convention immediately burned its bridges. It denounced Van Buren, it opposed Marcy, and it indorsed Seward. Behind it were bank officers and stockholders who were to lose the privilege of loaning the money of the United States for their own benefit, and the harder it struck them the more liberally they paid for fireworks and for shouters.

If trouble confronted the Democrats, discouragement oppressed the Whigs. Under the direction of Gerrit Smith the Abolitionists were on the war-path, questioning Seward as to the propriety of granting fugitive slaves a fair trial by jury, of abolishing distinctions in constitutional rights founded solely on complexion, and of repealing the law authorising the importation of slaves into the State and their detention as such during a period of nine months. Seward avowed his firm faith in trial by jury and his opposition to all "human bondage," but he declined making ante-election pledges. He preferred to wait, he said, until each case came before him for decision. Seward undoubtedly took the wise course; but he did not satisfy the extremists represented by Smith, and many of the Whig leaders became panic-stricken. "The Philistines are upon us," wrote Millard Fillmore, who was canvassing the State. "I now regard all as lost irrevocably. We shall never be able to burst the withes. Thank God, I can endure it as long as they, but I am sick of our Whig party. It can never be in the ascendant."[5]

Francis Granger was no less alarmed. He estimated the Abolitionist vote at twenty thousand, "and before the grand contest of 1840," he wrote Weed, "they will control one-fourth the votes of the State. They are engaged in it with the same honest purpose that governed the great mass of Anti-Masons."[6] The young candidate at Auburn was also in despair. "I fear the State is lost," he wrote Weed on November 4. "This conclusion was forced upon me strongly by news from the southern tier of counties, and is confirmed by an analogy in Ohio. But I will not stop to reason on the

[5] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 60.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

causes. Your own sagacity has doubtless often considered them earlier and more forcibly than mine."[7]

But Horace Greeley did not share these gloomy forebodings. He was then engaged in editing the *Jeffersonian,* a weekly journal of eight pages, which had been established in February solely as a campaign newspaper. His regular business was the publication of the *New Yorker,* a journal of literature and general intelligence. During the campaign he consented to spend two days of each week at Albany making up the *Jeffersonian,* which was issued from the office of the *Evening Journal,* and he was doing this work with the indefatigable industry and marvellous ability that marked his character.

Greeley had battled for a place in the world after the manner of Thurlow Weed. He was born on a New Hampshire farm, he had worked on a Vermont farm, and for a time it seemed to him as if he must forever remain on a farm; but after a few winters of schooling he started over the Vermont hills to learn the printer's trade. A boy was not needed in Whitehall, and he pushed on to Poultney. There he found work for four years until the *Northern Spectator* expired. Then he went back to the farm. But newspaper life in a small town had made him ambitious to try his fortunes in a city, and, journeying from one printing office to another, he finally drifted, in 1831, at the age of twenty, into New York.

Up to this time Greeley's life had resembled Weed's only in his voracious appetite for reading newspapers. He cared little for the boys about town and less for the sports of youth; he could dispense with sleep, and wasted no time thinking about what he should eat or wear; but books, and especially newspapers, were read with the avidity that a well-fed threshing machine devours a stack of wheat. He seemed to have only one ambition—the acquisition of knowledge and the career of a man of letters, and in his efforts to succeed, he ignored forms and social usages, forgot that he had a physical body to care for, and detested man-worship.

[7] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward,* Vol. 1, p. 61.

Standing at last before a printer's case on Broadway, he was able to watch, almost from the beginning, the great political drama in which he was destined to play so great a part. Seward had just entered the State Senate; Weed, having recently established the *Evening Journal,* was massing the Anti-Masons and National Republicans for their last campaign; William Lloyd Garrison had issued the first number of the *Liberator;* Gerrit Smith, already in possession of his father's vast estate, still clung to the Liberian colonisation scheme; and Van Buren, not yet returned from England, was about entering upon the last stage of his phenomenally successful political career. Politicians for the first time disturbed about the tariff, the bank, and internal improvements, had come to the parting of the ways; the old order of things had ended under John Quincy Adams—the new had just commenced under Andrew Jackson. But the young compositor needed no guide-post to direct his political footsteps. In 1834, he had established the *New Yorker* and those who read it became Whigs. His mind acted upon other minds of a certain constitution with wonderful magnetism, attracting thousands of readers by his marvellous gift of expression and the broad sympathies and clear discernments that characterised his writings. He had his own ideas about the necessity for reforms, and he seems easily to have fallen a victim to countless delusions and illusions which young visionaries and gray-headed theorists brought to him; but, in spite of remonstrances and crushing opposition, he stood resolutely for whatever awoke the strongest emotions of his nature.

Thurlow Weed had been a constant reader of the *New Yorker.* He did not know the name of its editor and had never taken the trouble to inquire, but when a cheap weekly Whig newspaper was needed for a vigorous campaign in 1838, the editor of the *New Yorker,* whoever he might be, seemed the proper man to edit and manage it. Going to New York, he called at the Ann Street office and found himself in the presence of a young man, slender, light-haired, slightly stooping, and very near-sighted, who introduced himself as

Horace Greeley. At the moment, he was standing at the case, with coat off and sleeves rolled up, setting type with the ease and rapidity of an expert. "When I informed him of the object of my visit," says Weed, "he was, of course, surprised, but evidently gratified. Nor was his surprise and gratification diminished to learn that I was drawn to him without any other reason or information but such as I had derived from the columns of the *New Yorker*. He suggested the *Jeffersonian* as the name for the new paper, and the first number appeared in February, 1838."[8]

It is one of the privileges of genius to discern the genius of others; but even Thurlow Weed could not have dreamed that he was giving opportunity to a man whose name was to rank higher than his own in history. There was a certain affinity between the intellectual nature of the two men, and they had now a common object. Both were journalists of tremendous energy, indomitable industry, and marvellous gifts; but Weed was a politician, Greeley a political preacher. Weed's influence lay in his remarkable judgment, his genius for diplomacy, and his rare gift of controlling individuals by personal appeal and by the overpowering mastery of his intellect; Greeley's supremacy grew out of his broad sympathies with the human race and his matchless ability to write. Weed's field of operations was confined largely to the State of New York and to delegates and men of influence who assemble at national conventions; Greeley preached to the whole country, sweeping along like a prairie fire and converting men to his views as easily as steel filings are attracted to the magnet. From the outset he was above dictation. He lacked judgment, and at times greatly grieved the friends who were willing to follow him through fire and flood; but once his mind was made up he surrendered his understanding, his consciousness of convictions, of duty, and of public good, to no man or set of men. "I trust we can never be enemies," he once wrote Weed, "but better anything than I should feel the weight of chains about my neck, that

[8] *Autobiography of Thurlow Weed*, p. 466.

I should write and act with an eye to any man's pleasure, rather than to the highest good."[9]

As the editor of the *Jeffersonian,* which now quickly won a multitude of readers, he did his work with marked ability, discussing measures calmly and forcibly, and with an influence that baffled his opponents and surprised his friends. Greeley seems never to have been an immature writer. His felicity of expression and ability to shade thought, with a power of appeal and invective that belongs to experience and mature age, came to him, as they did to Hamilton, before he was out of his teens, and whether he was right or whether he was wrong, he was always the most interesting, always the most commanding figure in American journalism in the epoch-making political controversies of his day.

The Whigs thought it a happy omen that election day, November 7, came this year on the anniversary of General Harrison's victory at Tippecanoe. As the returns came in Seward's friends grew more elated, and on Saturday, the 11th, Weed covered the entire first page of the *Evening Journal* with the picture of an eagle, having outspread wings and bearing in its beak the word "Victory." It was the first appearance in politics of this American bird, which was destined to play a part in all future celebrations of the kind. The completed returns showed that the Whigs had elected Seward and Bradish by ten thousand four hundred and twenty-one majority,[10] five of the eight senators, and nearly two-thirds of the assemblymen. "Well, dear Seward," wrote Weed, "we are victorious; God be thanked—gratefully and devoutly thanked."[11] Seward was no less affected. "It is a fearful post I have coveted," he wrote; "I shudder at my temerity. . . . Indeed, I feel just now as if your zeal had been blind; but I may, perhaps, get over this. God grant, at all events, that I be spared from committing

[9] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed,* Vol. 2, p. 97.

[10] William H. Seward, 192,882; William L. Marcy, 182,461.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

[11] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward,* Vol. 1, p. 379.

the sin of ingratitude. I hate it as the foulest in the catalogue."[12]

Marcy seemed to accept his defeat good-naturedly. "Even before the ballot-boxes were closed," he wrote, facetiously, "I had partly persuaded myself to engage in a work for *my* posterity, by writing the history of the rise, progress, and termination of the Regency. It will embrace the transactions of the golden days of the Republic (Empire State). It began with my entrance into public life, and terminates with my exit from it. The figures in the tableau will not be of the largest size, but the ascendancy of honest men, for such I think them to have been *(Ilium fuit),* will be interesting on account of great rarity." But, to the same friend, a few weeks later, he took a desponding view, expressing the fear that the power which had passed from the Democratic party would not return to as honest hands. His financial condition, too, caused him much uneasiness. He had given eighteen years to the State, he said, the largest portion of an active and vigorous life, and now found himself poorer than when he took office. "If my acquisitions in a pecuniary way have probably been less and my labours and exertions greater," he asks, "what compensating advantages are to be brought into the calculation to balance the account?" An office-holder rarely asks such a question until thrown out of a position; while in office, it is evident he thinks the privilege of holding it sufficient compensation; otherwise, it may be presumed, he would resign. Marcy, however, was not forgotten. Indeed, his political career had scarcely begun, since the governorship became only a stepping-stone to continued honours. Within a few months, President Van Buren appointed him, under the convention of April, 1839, to the Mexican Claims Commission, and a few years later he was to become a member of two Cabinets.

[12] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed,* Vol. 2, p. 61.

CHAPTER III

THE DEFEAT OF VAN BUREN FOR PRESIDENT

1840

After Seward's election, the Whig party in New York may be fairly described as under the control of Thurlow Weed, who became known as the "Dictator." Although no less drastic and persevering, perhaps, than DeWitt Clinton's, it was a control far different in method. Clinton did not disguise his power. He was satisfied in his own mind that he knew better than any other how to guide his party and govern his followers, and he acted accordingly—dogmatic, overbearing, often far from amiable, sometimes unendurable, to those around him. Weed, on the contrary, was patient, sympathetic, gentle, and absolutely without asperity. "My dear Weed," wrote Seward on December 14, 1838, "the sweetness of his temper inclines me to love my tyrant. I had no idea that dictators were such amiable creatures."[1] In a humourous vein, William Kent, the gifted son of the Chancellor, addressed him. "Mr. Dictator, the whole State is on your shoulders. I take it, some future chronicler, in reciting the annals of New York during this period, in every respect equal to England in the time of Elizabeth, will devote the brightest colours to 'the celebrated Thurlow Weed, who so long filled the office of Governor Seward during his lengthened and prosperous administration.' It behooves you, therefore, to act circumspectly, and particularly in the advice you give the Governor as to appointments to office."[2]

[1] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 63. F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 381.

[2] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 72.

Few chapters of personal history can be more interesting than that which tells of the strange, subtle influence exercised by Weed over the mind of Seward; but it is doubtful if there was conscious control at any time. Certainly Seward never felt "the weight of chains" about his neck. Weed probably saw good reason to believe that in Seward he could have just the sort of an associate who would suit all his purposes, since their views of public affairs and their estimate of public men rarely differed. "Our relations had become so intimate," he says, "and our sentiments and sympathies proved so congenial, that our interests, pursuits, and hopes of promoting each other's welfare and happiness became identical."[3] Weed seemed to glory in Seward's success, and Seward was supremely happy in and proud of Weed's friendship. Weed and Greeley were so differently constituted that, between them, such a relation could not exist, although at times it seemed to give Greeley real pain that it was so. "I rise early from a bed of sleepless thought," he once wrote Weed, "to explain that we differ radically on the bank question, and I begin to fear we do on the general policy and objects of political controversy."[4] But there were no such sleepless nights for Seward. Looking back upon four years of gubernatorial life, he opens his heart freely to the friend of his young manhood. "Without your aid," he declares, "how helpless would have been my prospect of reaching the elevation from which I am to-day descending. How could I have sustained myself there; how could I have secured the joyous reflections of this hour, but for the confidence I so undenyingly reposed on your affection?"[5] It was not Seward's nature to depend upon somebody to have his path in life or his ways of thinking pointed out to him; nor did he have the weakness of many highly cultured and gifted men who believe too much in the supremacy of intellect and culture. On the contrary, he had a way of speaking out his

[3] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 1, p. 423.
[4] *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 97.
[5] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 642.

own honest thoughts, and would have despised himself, as much as would Greeley, if it had been necessary to enjoy any one's friendship on terms of humiliation. It was his nature, as well as his wish, to share with Weed the benefit of the latter's almost infallible judgment in political matters. In this way, Weed, more than either realised, had great influence with Seward. But Weed was no more the directing mind of the administration of Seward than was Hamilton of Washington's, or Van Buren of Jackson's, or Seward of Lincoln's. Many anecdotes were told illustrative of this influence, which serve to show how strongly the notion obtained in the minds of the common people that Weed was really "the Dictator." The best, associated Seward with his invariable custom of riding outside the coach while smoking his after-dinner cigar. The whip, on this occasion, did not know the distinguished traveller, and, after answering Seward's many questions, attempted to discover the identity of his companion. The Governor disclaimed being a merchant, a lecturer, a minister, or a teacher. "Then I know what you are," said the driver; "you must be a lawyer, or you wouldn't ask so many questions." "That is not my business at present," replied Seward. "Then who are you?" finally demanded Jehu. "I am the governor of this State," replied Seward. The driver at once showed incredulity, and the Governor offered to leave it to the landlord at the next tavern. On arriving there, and after exchanging salutations, Seward suggested the question in dispute. "No, you are not the governor," replied the landlord, to the great satisfaction of the driver. "What!" exclaimed Seward, in astonishment; "then who is governor?" "Why," said the landlord, "Thurlow Weed." [6]

"Though the incident never occurred," says Frederick W. Seward, in the biography of his father, "the story was so accordant with his habit of riding outside to smoke, and with the popular understanding of his relations with Mr. Weed, that it was generally accepted as true. Seward him-

[6] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 100.

self used laughingly to relate it, and say that, though it was not quite true, it ought to be."[7]

With Governor Seward's inauguration the Whig party was placed on trial. Ten years had passed since DeWitt Clinton's death, and Seward was the first successor whose opinions and sentiments harmonised with those of that distinguished statesman. During the intervening period the Regency had been in absolute control of the State. It had contented itself with looking after things as they existed, rather than undertaking further improvements and reforms. Seward's election, therefore, was not only a revolution of parties, but a radical change of policy. Every Whig, fearful lest some misstep might lead to the early loss of the power just gained, had an opinion as to what should and should not be done. Some were afraid the Governor would say too much, others fearful he would say too little. Seward, moving on broad lines of economics and reform, believed that the promotion of transportation, the development of capital and credit, and the enlargement of educational advantages, would bring wealth to the State and greater happiness to the people; and his first message contained the policy that guided him throughout his entire political career. In its preparation, he relied upon President Knott of Union College for assistance on the subject of education; on John H. Beach for financial statistics; on Samuel B. Ruggles for canal figures; and on John C. Spencer for general suggestions. Then he sat down with Weed for its final revision. When completed, it contained the groundwork of his political philosophy. He would prosecute the work of the canals, he would encourage the completion of railroads, establish a board of internal improvement, extend charitable institutions, improve the discipline of prisons, elevate the standard of education in schools and colleges, establish school district libraries, provide for the education of the coloured race, reform the practice of courts, cut off superfluous offices, repeal the Small Bills law, authorise banking under general laws, and apply

[7] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 395.

rigorous safeguards, especially in populous cities, for the purity of the ballot-box. In concluding, he paid a handsome tribute to DeWitt Clinton and recommended that a monument be erected to his memory in Albany.

None of our statesmen, with whom reform has been a characteristic trait, was more devoted or happy. His delight, deep and unfailing, extended to every department of the government, and the minuteness of his knowledge betrayed the intimate acquaintance which he had gained of the affairs of the State during his four years in the Senate. His message caught the inspiration of this fresh and joyous maturity. It was written, too, in the easy, graceful style, rhythmical and subdued in expression, which afterward contributed to his extreme charm as an orator. From the first, Seward was an ardent optimist, and this first message is that of noble youth, delighting in the life and the opportunities that a great office presents to one who is mindful of its harassing duties and its relentless limitations, yet keenly sensitive to its novelty and its infinite incitements. The Democrats, whose hearts must have rejoiced when they heard his message, declared it the visionary schemes of a theorising politician, the work of a sophomore rather than a statesman; yet, within little more than a decade, most of his suggestions found a place in the statute book. Though the questions of that time are not the questions of our day, and engage only the historian and his readers, these twenty printed pages of recommendations, certain to excite debate and opposition, must always be read with deep enjoyment.

The chief criticism of his opponents grew out of his acceptance of Ruggles's estimate that the canals would more than reimburse the cost of their construction and enlargement. The *Argus* asserted that Seward, instead of sustaining the policy of "pay as you go," favoured a "forty million debt;" and this became the great campaign cry of the Democrats in two elections. On the other hand, the Whigs maintained that the canals had enriched the people and the State, and that their future prosperity depended upon the enlarge-

ment of the Erie canal, so that its capacity would meet the increasing demands of business. In the end, the result showed how prophetically Seward wrote and how wisely Ruggles figured; for, although the Erie canal, in 1862, had cost $52,491,915.74, it had repaid the State with an excess of $42,000,000.

In the midst of so many recommendations, one wonders that Seward had nothing to say for civil service reform. We may doubt, and with reason, whether anything he might have said could have strengthened the slight hold which such a theory then had in the minds of the people, but it would have brought the need of reform strikingly before the country to bear, in time, ripe fruit. The Whig party, however, was not organised to keep Democrats in office, and no sooner had the Albany *Journal* announced Seward's election than applications began pouring in upon the Governor-elect until more than one thousand had been filed. Seward afterward said that, of these applications, only two came from persons living west of Cayuga Bridge, although the eighth district had given him a majority equal to his entire majority in the State.

Under the Constitution of 1821, there were more places to fill by appointment than under the Constitution of 1846, and twice as many as now exist. In 1839, the Governor not only appointed port-wardens, harbour-masters, notaries public, and superintendents and commissioners of various sorts, but he nominated judges, surrogates, county clerks, examiners of prisons, weighers of merchandise, measurers of grain, cullers of staves, and inspectors of flour, lumber, spirits, salt, beef and pork, hides and skins, and fish and oil, besides numerous other officers. They applied formally to the Governor and then went to Weed to get the place. Just so the Whig legislators went through the form of holding a caucus to select state officers after the slate had been made up. John C. Spencer became secretary of state; Bates Cook of Niagara County, comptroller; Willis Hall of New York City, attorney-general; Jacob Haight, treasurer; and Orville L. Holley,

surveyor-general. Thurlow Weed's account, read with the knowledge that he alone selected them, is decidedly humourous. "Bates Cook had but a local reputation," he says, "and it required the strongest assurances from Governor Seward and myself that he was abundantly qualified." In other words, it was necessary for the caucus to know that Weed wanted him. "The canvass for attorney-general was very spirited," he continues, "Joshua A. Spencer of Oneida and Samuel Stevens of Albany being the most prominent candidates;" but Willis Hall, "who was better known on the stump than at the bar, and whose zeal, energy, and tact had been conspicuous and effective in overthrowing the Democratic party," got the office. Van Buren could not have surpassed this for practical politics. "The nomination of Jacob Haight," he goes on, "afforded me great satisfaction. I had learned in my boyhood at Catskill to esteem and honour him. In 1824 when, as a Democratic senator, he arrayed himself against William H. Crawford, the caucus nominee for President, and zealously supported John Quincy Adams, my early remembrances of him grew into a warm personal friendship."[8] It was easy to fuse in Weed's big heart Democratic apostacy and the associations of boyhood.

Yet Weed had able indorsers behind his candidates. "I hear there is great opposition to Willis Hall," wrote William Kent, "and I am sorry for it. He has a great heart, and a great head, too. It has been his misfortune, but our good fortune, that his time and talents have been devoted to advancing the Whig party, while those who oppose him were taxing costs and filing demurrers. The extreme Webster men in New York have formed a combination against Willis. It is the dog in the manger, too, for no man from New York is a candidate."[9]

But the dictator made a greater display of practical politics in the selection of a United States senator to succeed Nathaniel P. Tallmadge. There were several aspirants,

[8] *Autobiography of Thurlow Weed*, p. 459.

[9] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 73.

among them Millard Fillmore, John C. Spencer, John A. Collier, and Joshua A. Spencer. All these men were intensely in earnest. Fillmore, then in Congress, was chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means; and advancement to the Senate would have been a deserved promotion. But Tallmadge had rallied to the support of Seward, under the name of Conservatives, many former National Republicans, who had joined the Democratic party because of anti-Masonry, and Weed believed in keeping them in the Whig party by re-electing their leader. Fillmore, and other candidates, earnestly protested against the policy of discarding tried and faithful friends, and of conferring the highest and most important place in the gift of the party upon a new recruit whose fidelity could not be trusted; "but, strong as those gentlemen were in the Whig party, they were unable to overcome a conviction in the minds of the Whig members of the Legislature," says Weed, solemnly, as if the Whig members of the Legislature really did have something to do with it, "that in view of the approaching presidential election Mr. Tallmadge was entitled to their support. He was, therefore, nominated with considerable unanimity."[10] It was a great shock to Fillmore, which he resented a few years later. Indeed, Weed's dictatorship, although quiet and gentle, was already raising dissent. Albert H. Tracy, indignant at Seward's nomination over the heads of older and more experienced men, had withdrawn from politics, and Gamaliel H. Barstow, the first state treasurer elected by the Whigs, resigned in a huff because he did not like the way things were going. Weed fully realised the situation. "There are a great many disappointed, disheartened friends," he wrote Granger. "It has been a tremendous winter. But for the presidential question which will absorb all other things, the appointments would tear us to pieces."[11] To his door, Seward knew, the censure of the disappointed would be aimed. "The list of appointments made this winter is fourteen hun-

[10] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 1, p. 461.
[11] *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 86.

dred," he writes, "and I am not surprised by any manifestation of disappointment or dissatisfaction. This only I claim —that no interest, passion, prejudice or partiality of my own has controlled any decision I have made."[12]

But there was one wheel lacking in the Weed machine. The Democrats controlled the Senate, obstructing bills deemed by the Whigs essential to the public welfare, and refusing to confirm Seward's nominations. By preventing an agreement upon a candidate, preliminary to a joint ballot, they also blocked the election of a United States senator. This situation was intolerable to Weed. Without the Senate, little could be accomplished and nothing of a strictly partisan character. Besides, Weed had his eye on the lucrative place of state printer. In the campaign of 1839, therefore, he set to work to win the higher body of the Legislature by carrying the Albany district, in which three senators were to be chosen. For eighteen years, the Senate had been held by the Regency party, and, in all that time, Albany was numbered among the reliable Democratic districts. But Weed's friends now brought up eight thousand dollars from New York. The Democrats had made a spirited fight, and, although they knew Weed was endowed with a faculty for management, they did not know of his money, or of the ability of his lieutenants to place it. When the votes were counted, Weed's three nominees had an average majority of one hundred and thirty-three. This gave the Whigs nineteen senators and the Democrats thirteen. It was an appalling change for the Democrats, to whom it seemed the prologue to a defeat in 1840. In the "clean sweep" of office-holders that followed, Tallmadge went back to the United States Senate, and Weed took from Croswell the office of public printer.

The presidential election of 1840 began in December, 1839. During Clay's visit to Saratoga, in the preceding summer, Weed had told him he could not carry New York; but, that Clay's friends in New York City, and along the river counties, might not be unduly alarmed, Weed masked his purpose

[12] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 483.

of forcing Harrison's nomination, by selecting delegates ostensibly favourable to General Scott. Twenty delegates for Scott were, therefore, sent to the national convention at Harrisburg, two for Harrison and ten for Clay. On his way, Weed secured an agreement from the New England leaders to act with him, and, by a combination of the supporters of Scott and Harrison, the latter finally received one hundred and forty-eight votes to ninety for Clay. The disappointment of Clay's friends is historic. Probably nothing parallels it in American politics. The defeat of Seward at Chicago in 1860, and of Blaine at Cincinnati in 1876, very seriously affected their friends, but the disappointment of Clay's supporters at Harrisburg, in December, 1839, took the form of anger, which, for a time, seemed fatal to the ticket. "The nomination of Harrison," wrote Thurlow Weed, "so offended the friends of Clay that the convention was thrown entirely in the dark on the question of Vice President. The Kentucky delegation was asked to present a candidate, but they declined. Then John Clayton of Delaware was fixed upon, but Reverdy Johnson withdrew his name. Watkins Leigh of Virginia and Governor Dudley of North Carolina were successively designated, but they declined. While this was passing the Vice Presidency was repeatedly offered to New York, but we had no candidate. Albert H. Tracy was eminently qualified for usefulness in public life. He entertained a high and strict sense of official responsibility, and had he not previously left us he would have been nominated. John Tyler was finally taken because we could get nobody else to accept."[13]

The Harrisburg convention, unlike its unselfish predecessors, adjourned without a platform or declaration of principles; nor did the candidates, in accepting their nominations, indulge in political discussion. Votes were wanted from all who opposed Van Buren's administration—from the strict constructionist friends of Tyler, although opposed to the whole Whig theory of government, as much as from

[13] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 77.

the followers of Harrison, who believed in protective tariffs and internal improvements.

Such action contrasted strangely with the work of the national Democratic convention which met at Baltimore on May 6, 1840. If despondency filled the air, the delegates at least had the courage of their convictions. After unanimously renominating Van Buren, it declared for a limited federal power, for the separation of public moneys from private banks, and for the constitutional inability of Congress to interfere with slavery in the States, pronouncing the efforts of Abolitionists both alarming and dangerous to the Union; it opposed internal improvements by the general government; the fostering of one industry to the injury of another; the raising of more money than was needed for necessary expenses; and the rechartering of a national bank. If this declaration did not shape the phrases, and marshal the sentences of future platforms of the party, it embraced the principles upon which Democracy went up to victory or down to defeat during the next two decades; and it must have carried Van Buren through successfully had not his administration fallen upon evil times.

The President, with great moral courage and keen-sighted wisdom, met the crisis of 1837 with an admirable bearing. The statesman suddenly displaced the politician. In the three months intervening between the suspension of specie payments and the extra session of Congress, Van Buren prepared a message as clear and as unanswerable as the logic of Hamilton's state papers. The law, he said, required the secretary of the treasury to deposit public moneys only in banks paying their notes in specie, and, since all banks had suspended specie payments, it was necessary to provide some other custody. For this reason, he had summoned Congress. Then he analysed the cause of the panic, arguing that "the government could not help people earn a living, but it could refuse to aid the deception that paper is gold, and the delusion that value can arise without labour." Those who look to the action of the government, he declared, for specific aid

to the citizen to relieve embarrassments arising from losses by reverses in commerce and credit, lose sight of the ends for which government is created, and the powers with which it is clothed. In conclusion, he recommended the enactment of an independent treasury scheme, divorcing the bank and the state.

These words of wisdom, often repeated, long ago became the principle of all administrations, notably of that of President Grant in the great crisis of 1873; and, except from 1841 to 1846, the sub-treasury scheme has been a cardinal feature of American finance. But its enactment was a long, fierce battle. Beginning in 1837, the contest continued through one Congress and half of another. Clay resisted and Webster denounced the project, which did not become a law until July 4, 1840—too late to be of assistance to Van Buren in November. Friends of the New Yorker loved to dwell upon his courage in thus placing himself in the chasm between failing banks and a patriotic people, often paralleling it with the historic leap of Marcus Curtius into the Roman Forum to save the republic. "But with this difference," once exclaimed Andrew B. Dickinson, an unlearned but brilliant Steuben County Whig, generally known as Bray Dickinson: "the Roman feller jumped into the gap of his own accord, but the people throw'd Van Buren in!"

On August 12, 1840, the Whigs renominated William H. Seward for governor, and in the following month the Democrats named William C. Bouck. There was a rugged honesty and ability about Bouck that commended him to the people. He was not brilliant; he rarely attempted to speak in public; and his education had been limited to a few months of school in each winter; but he was a shrewd, wise Schoharie farmer, well read in the ways of men and in the book of the world. Seward thought him "a kind, honest, amiable, and sagacious man, his easy and fascinating manners lacking neither dignity nor grace." Beginning as town clerk, Bouck had served acceptably as sheriff, assemblyman, and for nineteen years as canal commissioner, personally superintending the construc-

tion of the canal from Brockport to Lake Erie, and disbursing, without loss, eight millions of dollars. He had travelled up and down the State until the people came to know him as "the old white horse," in allusion to a favourite animal which he rode for many years; and to labourers and contractors his election became a matter of the greatest personal interest.

But the hardships growing out of the panic of 1837 and the crisis of 1839 guided the actions of men. It made little difference to them that Bouck had been a faithful, prudent, and zealous supporter of the canals, or that, like DeWitt Clinton, he had been removed as canal commissioner on purely political grounds. The issues were national—not state. Van Buren clearly saw the force and direction of public sentiment. Yet his sub-treasury measure, so beneficent in its aims that its theory was not lost in the necessities growing out of the Civil War, proved the strongest weapon in the armory of his opponents. Webster, with mingled pathos and indignation, denounced his "disregard for the public distress" by his "exclusive concern for the interest of government and revenue," declaring that help must come to the people "from the government of the United States—from thence alone!" This was the cry of the greenbacker in 1876 and the argument of the free silver advocate in 1896. "Upon this," said Webster, "I risk my political reputation, my honour, my all. He who expects to live to see these twenty-six States resuming specie payments in regular succession once more, may expect to see the restoration of the Jews. Never. He will die without the sight." Yet Webster lived to see the resumption of specie payments in a very short time, and he lived long enough also to exclude this St. Louis speech from his collected works. Nevertheless, Webster's eloquence contributed to Van Buren's overwhelming defeat.

Much has been written of the historic campaign of 1840. The enthusiasm has been called "frenzy" and "crazy fanaticism." It has also been likened to the crusading spirit, aroused by the preaching of Peter the Hermit. "The nation," said Clay, "was like the ocean when convulsed by some

terrible storm." Webster declared that "every breeze says change; the cry, the universal cry, is for a change." Long before campaigns usually begin New York was a blaze of excitement. Halls were insufficient to hold the crowds. Where hundreds had formerly assembled, thousands now appeared. The long lines of wagons, driven to the meeting places, raised clouds of dust such as mark the moving of armies. The Whig state convention at Utica became a mass-meeting of twenty-five thousand people, who formed into one great parade. "How long is this procession?" asked a bystander of one of the marshals. "Indeed, sir, I cannot tell," was the reply. "The other end of it is forming somewhere near Albany."

The canvass became one of song, of association, and of imagination, which aroused thoughts that were intensely animating and absorbing. The taunt of a Virginia newspaper that Harrison should remain in his log cabin on the banks of the Ohio made the log cabin "a symbol," as Weed happily expressed it, "of virtue that dwells in obscurity, of the hopes of the humble, of the privations of the poor, of toil and danger, of hospitality and charity and frugality." Log cabins sprang up like gourds in a night. At the door, stood the cider barrel, and, hanging by the window, the omnipresent coonskin swayed in the breeze. They appeared on medals, in pictures, in fancy work, and in processions. Horace Greeley, who had done so much in 1838 through the columns of the *Jeffersonian,* now began the publication of the *Log Cabin,* filling whole sides of it with songs elaborately set to music, and making it so universally popular that the New York *Tribune,* established in the following year, became its legitimate successor in ability and in circulation.

In his biography of Henry Clay, Schurz says that in no presidential canvass has there ever been "less thought." It is likely if there had been no log cabins, no cider, no coonskins, and no songs, the result would have been the same, for, in the presence of great financial distress, the people seek relief very much as they empty a burning building. But the reader of the *Log Cabin* will find thought enough. Greeley's

editorials summed up the long line of mistakes leading to the panic of 1837, and the people understood the situation. They were simply unwilling longer to trust the party in power.

Evidence of this distrust astonished Democrats as much as it pleased the Whigs. The September election in Maine, followed in October by the result in Ohio and Indiana, both of which gave large Whig majorities, anticipated Harrison's overwhelming election in November. In New York, however, the returns were somewhat disappointing to the Whigs. Harrison carried the State by thirteen thousand majority, receiving in all 234 electoral votes to 60 for Van Buren; but Seward's majority of ten thousand in 1838 now dropped to five thousand,[14] while the Whig majority in the Assembly was reduced to four.

Seward's weakness undoubtedly grew out of his message in the preceding January. With the approval of Dr. Knott of Union College, and Dr. Luckey, a distinguished Methodist divine, he recommended the establishment of separate schools for the children of foreigners and their instruction by teachers of the same faith and language. The suggestion created an unexpected and bitter controversy. Influential journals of both parties professed to see in it only a desire to win Catholic favour, charging that Bishop Hughes of New York City had inspired the recommendation. At that time, the Governor had neither met nor been in communication with the Catholic prelate; but, in the excitement, truth could not outrun misstatement, nor could the patriotism that made Seward solicitous to extend school advantages to the children of foreign parents, who were growing up in ignorance, be understood by zealous churchmen.

After his defeat, Van Buren retired to Lindenwald, in the vicinity of Kinderhook, his native village, where he was to live twenty-one years, dying at the age of eighty. Lindenwald was an old estate, whose acres had been cultivated for

[14] William H. Seward, 222,011; William C. Bouck, 216,808.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

one hundred and sixty years. William P. Van Ness, the distinguished jurist and orator, once owned it, and, thirty years before the ex-President bought it, Irving had secluded himself amidst its hills, while he mourned the death of his betrothed, and finished the *Knickerbocker*. As the home of Van Buren, Lindenwald did not, perhaps, become a Monticello or a Montpelier. Jefferson and Madison, having served eight years, the allotted term of honour, had formally retired, and upon them settled the halo of peace and triumph that belongs to the sage; but life at Lindenwald, with its leisure, its rural quiet, and its freedom from public care, satisfied Van Buren's bucolic tastes, and no doubt greatly mitigated the anguish arising from bitter defeat, the proscription of friends, and the loss of party regard which he was destined to suffer during the next decade.

CHAPTER IV

HUMILIATION OF THE WHIGS

1841-1842

The Whig state convention, assembled at Syracuse on October 7, 1842, looked like the ghost of its predecessor in 1840. The buoyancy which then stamped victory on every face had given place to fear and forebodings. Eighteen months had left nothing save melancholy recollections. Even the log cabins, still in place, seemed to add to Whig depression, being silent reminders of the days when melody and oratory, prophetic of success, filled hearts which could no longer be touched with hope and faith. This meant that the Whigs, in the election of 1841, had suffered a decisive defeat, losing the Assembly, the Senate, and most of the congressmen. Even Francis Granger, whose majority usually ran into the thousands, was barely elected by five hundred. Orleans County, at one time the centre of the anti-masonic crusade, sent Sanford E. Church to Albany, the first Democrat to break into the Assembly from the "infected district" since the abduction of William Morgan.

Several reasons accounted for this change. Harrison's death, within a month after his inauguration, made John Tyler President, and Tyler first refused appointments to Whigs, and then vetoed the bill, passed by a Whig Congress, re-establishing the United States Bank. He said that he had been opposed, for twenty-five years, to the exercise of such a power, if any such power existed under the Constitution. This completed the break with the party that elected him. Henry Clay denounced his action, the Cabinet, except Webster, resigned in a body, and the Whigs with great unanimity indorsed the Kentucky statesman for President in 1844.

To add to the complications in New York, John C. Spencer, who now became secretary of war, so zealously espoused and warmly defended the President that feelings of mutual distrust and ill-will soon grew up between him and Weed. It is doubtful if any New York Whig, at a time of such humiliation, could have accepted place in Tyler's Cabinet and remained on terms of political intimacy with Weed; but, of all men, John C. Spencer was the least likely to do so. In Freeman's celebrated cartoon, "The Whig Drill," Spencer is the only man in the squad out of step with Thurlow Weed, the drum-major.

Governor Seward also played a part in the story of his party's downfall. The school question, growing out of his recommendation that separate schools for the children of Roman Catholics should share in the public moneys appropriated by the State for school purposes, lost none of its bitterness; the McLeod controversy put him at odds with the national Administration; and the Virginia controversy involved him in a correspondence that made him odious in the South. In his treatment of the McLeod matter, Seward was clearly right. Three years after the destruction of the *Caroline,* which occurred during the Canadian rebellion, Alexander McLeod, while upon a visit in the State, boasted that he was a member of the attacking party and had killed the only man shot in the encounter. This led to his arrest on a charge of murder and arson. The British Minister based his demand for McLeod's release on the ground that the destruction of the *Caroline* "was a public act of persons in Her Majesty's service, obeying the orders of their superior authorities." In approving the demand, Lord Palmerston suggested that McLeod's execution "would produce war, war immediate and frightful in its character, because it would be a war of retaliation and vengeance." Webster, then secretary of state, urged Seward to discontinue the prosecution and discharge McLeod; but the Governor, promising a pardon if McLeod was convicted, insisted that he had no power to interfere with the case until after trial, while the courts, upon an

application for McLeod's discharge on habeas corpus, held that as peace existed between Great Britain and the United States at the time of the burning of the *Caroline,* and as McLeod held no commission and acted without authority, England's assumption of responsibility for his act after his arrest did not oust the court of its jurisdiction. Fortunately, McLeod, proving his boast a lie by showing that he took no part in the capture of the *Caroline,* put an end to the controversy, but Seward's refusal to intervene broke whatever relations had existed between himself and Webster.

The Virginia correspondence created even greater bitterness. The Governor discovered that a requisition for the surrender of three coloured men, charged with aiding the escape of a fugitive slave, was based upon a defective affidavit; but, before he could act, the court discharged the prisoners upon evidence that no offence had been committed against the laws of Virginia. Here the matter might very properly have ended; but, in advising Virginia's governor of their discharge, Seward voluntarily and with questionable propriety, enlarged upon an interpretation of the constitutional provision for the surrender of fugitives from justice, contending that it applied to acts made criminal by the laws of both States, and not to "an act inspired by the spirit of humanity and of the Christian religion," which was not penal in New York. This was undoubtedly as good law as it was poor politics, for it needlessly aroused the indignation of Virginia, whose legislature retaliated by imposing special burdens upon vessels trading between Virginia and New York until such time as the latter should repeal the statute giving fugitive slaves the right of trial by jury.

The immediate cause of the Whig defeat, however, had its origin in disasters incident to the construction of the canals. It had been the policy of Governor Marcy, and other Democratic leaders, to confine the annual canal expenditures to the surplus revenues, and, in enlarging the Erie, it was determined to continue this policy. On the other hand, the Whigs advocated a speedy completion of the public works,

limiting the state debt to an amount upon which interest could be paid out of the surplus revenues derived from the canal. This policy, backed by several Democratic members of the Senate in 1838, resulted in the authorisation of a loan of four millions for the Erie enlargement. In 1839 Seward, still confident of the State's ability to sustain the necessary debt, advised other improvements, including the completion of the Genesee Valley and Black River canals, as well as the construction of three railroads, at a total estimated expenditure of twelve to fifteen millions. By 1841, the debt had increased to eighteen millions, including the loan of four millions, while the work was scarcely half finished. To add to the difficulty, state stocks depreciated over twenty per cent., embarrassing the administration in its efforts to raise money. The Democrats pronounced such a policy disastrous and ruinous; and, although the Whigs replied that the original estimates were wrong, that the price of labour and material had advanced, and that when completed the canals would speedily pay for themselves, the people thought it time to call a halt, and in the election of 1841 they called it.[1]

It was this overwhelming defeat that so depressed the Whigs, gathered at the Syracuse convention, as they looked over the field for a gubernatorial candidate to lead them, if possible, out of the wilderness of humiliation. Seward had declined a renomination. He knew that his course, especially

[1] "Seward had faults, which his accession to power soon displayed in bold relief. His natural tendencies were toward a government not merely paternal, but prodigal—one which, in its multiform endeavours to make every one prosperous, if not rich, was very likely to whelm all in general embarrassment, if not in general bankruptcy. Few governors have favoured, few senators voted for more unwisely lavish expenditures than he. Above the suspicion of voting money into his own pocket, he has a rooted dislike to opposing a project or bill whereby any of his attached friends are to profit. And, conceited as we all are, I think most men exceed him in the art of concealing from others their overweening faith in their own sagacity and discernment."—Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life*, p. 312.

in the Virginia controversy, had aroused a feeling of hostility among certain Whigs who not only resented his advancement over Granger and Fillmore, his seniors in years and in length of public service, but who dreaded his lead as too bold, too earnest, and too impulsive. The fact that the Abolitionists had already invited him to accept their nomination for President in 1844 indicated the extent to which his Virginia correspondence had carried him. So, he let his determination be known. "My principles are too liberal, too philanthropic, if it be not vain to say so, for my party," he wrote Christopher Morgan, then a leading member of Congress. "The promulgation of them offends many; the operation of them injures many; and their sincerity is questioned by about all. Those principles, therefore, do not receive fair consideration and candid judgment. There are some who know them to be right, and believe them to be sincere. These would sustain me. Others whose prejudices are aroused against them, or whose interests are in danger, would combine against me. I must, therefore, divide my party in convention. This would be unfortunate for them, and, of all others, the most false position for me. And what have I to lose by withdrawing and leaving the party unembarrassed? My principles are very good and popular ones for a man out of office; they will take care of me, when out of office, as they always have done. I have had enough, Heaven knows, of the power and pomp of place."[2]

With Seward out of the way, Luther Bradish was the logical candidate for governor. Fillmore had many friends present, and John A. Collier of Binghamton, alternating between hope and fear, let his wishes be known. But, as lieutenant-governor, Bradish had won popularity by firmness, patience, and that tact which springs from right feeling, rather than cold courtesy; and, in the end, the vote proved him the favourite. For lieutenant-governor, the convention chose Gabriel Furman, a Brooklyn lawyer of great natural ability, who had been a judge of the municipal court and

[2] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 547.

was just then closing a term in the State Senate, but whose promising career was already marred by the opium habit. He is best remembered as one of Brooklyn's most valued local historians. The resolutions, adhering to the former Whig policy, condemning Tyler's vetoes and indicating a preference for Clay, showed that the party, although stripped of its enthusiastic hopes, had lost none of its faith in its principles or confidence in its great standard-bearer.

The Democrats had divided on canal improvements. Beginning in the administration of Governor Throop, one faction, known as the Conservatives, had voted with the Whigs in 1838, while the other, called Radicals, opposed the construction of any works that would increase the debt. This division reasserted itself in the Legislature which convened in January, 1842. The Radicals elected all the state officers. Azariah C. Flagg became comptroller, Samuel Young secretary of state, and George P. Barker attorney-general. Six canal commissioners, belonging to the same wing of the party, were also selected. Behind them, as a leader of great force in the Assembly, stood Michael Hoffman of Herkimer, ready to rain fierce blows upon the policy of Seward and the Conservatives. Hoffman had served eight years in Congress, and three years as a canal commissioner. He was now, at fifty-four years of age, serving his first term in the Assembly, bringing to the work a great reputation both for talents and integrity, and as a powerful and effective debater.[3] Hoffman was educated for a physician, but afterward turned to the law. "Had he not been drawn into public life," says Thurlow

[3] "For four days the debate on a bill for the enlargement of the canals shed darkness rather than light over the subject, and the chamber grew murky. One morning a tallish man, past middle age, with iron-gray locks drooping on his shoulders, and wearing a mixed suit of plain clothes, took the floor. I noticed that pens, newspapers, and all else were laid down, and every eye fixed on the speaker. I supposed he was some quaint old joker from the backwoods, who was going to afford the House a little fun. The first sentences arrested my attention. A beam of light shot through the darkness, and I began to get glimpses of the question at issue.

Weed, "he would have been as eminent a lawyer as he became a statesman."[4]

The Albany Regency, as a harmonious, directing body, had, by this time, practically gone out of existence. Talcott was dead, Marcy and Silas Wright were in Washington, Benjamin F. Butler, having resigned from the Cabinet as attorney-general, in 1838, had resumed the practice of his profession in New York City, and Van Buren, waiting for another term of the Presidency, rested at Lindenwald. The remaining members of the original Regency, active as ever in political affairs, were now destined to head the two factions—Edwin Croswell, still editor of the Albany *Argus,* leading the Conservatives, with Daniel S. Dickinson, William C. Bouck, Samuel Beardsley, Henry A. Foster, and Horatio Seymour. Azariah C. Flagg, with Samuel Young, George P. Barker, and Michael Hoffman, directed the Radicals. All were able men. Bouck carried fewer guns than Young; Beardsley had weight and character, without much aptitude; Foster overflowed with knowledge and was really an able man, but his domineering nature and violent temper reduced his influence. Seymour, now only thirty-two years old, had not yet entered upon his illustrious and valuable public career; nor had Daniel S. Dickinson, although of acknowledged ability, exhibited those traits which were to distinguish him in party quarrels. He did not belong in the class with Marcy and Wright, though few New Yorkers showed more indomitable courage than Dickinson—a characteristic that greatly strengthened his influence in the councils of the leaders whose differences were already marked with asperity.

Success is wont to have magical effects in producing a wish

Soon a broad belt of sunshine spread over the chamber. 'Who is he?' I asked a member. 'Michael Hoffman,' was the reply. He spoke for an hour, and though his manner was quiet and his diction simple, he was so methodical and lucid in his argument that, where all had appeared confused before, everything now seemed clear." —H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections,* p. 173.

[4] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed,* Vol. 1, p. 34.

to put an end to difference; and the legislative winter of 1843 became notable for the apparent adjustment of Democratic divisions. The Radicals proposed the passage of an act, known as the "stop and tax law of 1842," suspending the completion of the public works, imposing a direct tax, and pledging a portion of the canal revenues as a sinking fund for the payment of the existing debt. It was a drastic measure, and leading Conservatives, with much vigour, sought to obtain a compromise permitting the gradual completion of the most advanced works. Bouck favoured sending an agent to Holland to negotiate a loan for this purpose, a suggestion pressed with some ardour until further effort threatened to jeopardise his chance of a renomination for governor; and when Bouck ceased his opposition other Conservatives fell into line. The measure, thus unobstructed, finally became the law, sending the Democrats into the gubernatorial campaign of 1842 with high hopes of success.

By accident or design, the Democratic state convention also met at Syracuse on October 7. William C. Bouck and Daniel S. Dickinson had been the candidates, in 1840, for governor and lieutenant-governor, and they now demanded renomination. The Radicals wanted Samuel Young or Michael Hoffman for governor; and, before the passage of the "stop and tax law," the contest bid fair to be a warm one. But, after making an agreement to pledge the party to the work of the last Legislature, the Radicals withdrew all opposition to Bouck and Dickinson. In their resolutions, the Democrats applauded Tyler's vetoes; approved the policy of his administration; denounced the re-establishment of a national bank; opposed a protective tariff; and favoured the sub-treasury, hard money, a strict construction of the Constitution, and direct taxation for public works.

The campaign that followed stirred no enthusiasm on either side. The Whigs felt the weight of the canal debt, which rested heavily upon the people; and, although many enthusiastic young men, active in the organisation of Clay clubs and in preparing the way for the Kentucky statesman

in 1844, held mass-meetings and read letters from their great leader, New York again passed under the control of the Democrats by a majority of nearly twenty-two thousand.[5] It was not an ordinary defeat; it was an avalanche. Only one Whig senator, thirty Whig assemblymen, and nine or ten congressmen were saved in the wreck. "I fear the party must break up from its very foundations," Fillmore wrote Weed. "There is no cohesive principle—no common head."[6]

Seward took no such pessimistic view. He had the promise of the future in him, a capacity for action, a ready sympathy with men of all classes, occupations, and interests, and he saw rays of light where others looked only into darkness. "It is not a bad thing to be left out of Congress," he wrote Christopher Morgan, depressed by his defeat. "You will soon be wanted in the State, and that is a better field."[7] Seward had the faculty of slow, reflective brooding, and he often saw both deep and far. In the night of that blinding defeat only such a nature could find comfort in the outlook.

[5] William C. Bouck, 208,072; Luther Bradish, 186,091.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

[6] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 96.

[7] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 627.

CHAPTER V

DEMOCRATS DIVIDE INTO FACTIONS

1842-1844

From the moment of William C. Bouck's inauguration as governor, in January, 1843, Democratic harmony disappeared. It was supposed the question of canal improvement had been settled by the "stop and tax law" of 1842, and by the subsequent agreement of the Conservatives, at the Syracuse convention, in the following October. No one believed that any serious disposition existed on the part of the Governor to open the wound, since he knew a large majority of his party opposed the resumption of the work, and that the state officers, who had viewed his nomination with coldness, were watching his acts and critically weighing his words.

But he also knew that his most zealous and devoted friends, living along the line of the Erie, Black River, and Genesee Valley canals, earnestly desired the speedy completion of certain parts of these waterways. In order to please them, his message suggested the propriety of taking advantage of the low prices of labour and provisions to finish some of the work. He did it timidly. There was no positive recommendation. He touched the subject as one handles a live electric wire, trembling lest he rouse the sleeping opposition of the Radicals, or fail to meet the expectation of friends. But the recommendation, too expressionless to cheer his friends and too energetic to suit his opponents, foreshadowed the pitfalls into which he was to tumble. He had been the first to suggest the Erie enlargement, and he knew better than any other man in the State how important was its completion; yet he said as little in its favour as could be said, if he said anything at

all, and that little seemed to be prompted, not so much for the good of the State, as to satisfy the demands of ardent friends, who had contributed to his nomination and election.

Severe criticism of the message, by the radical press, quickly showed that not even a temporary reconciliation had been effected by the act of 1842. Had the Governor now been sufficiently endowed with a faculty for good management, he must have strengthened himself and weakened his enemies with the vast amount of patronage at his command. Not since the days of Governor Lewis, had the making of so many appointments been committed to an executive. The Whigs, under Seward, had taken every office in the State. But Bouck, practising the nepotism that characterised Lewis' administration forty years before, took good care of his own family, and then, in the interest of harmony, turned whatever was left over to the members of the Legislature, who selected their own friends regardless of their relations to the Governor. There is something grim and pathetic in the picture of the rude awakening of this farmer governor, who, while working in his own weak way for harmony and conciliation, discovered, too late, that partisan rivalries and personal ambition had surrounded him with a cordon of enemies that could not be broken. To add to his humiliation, it frequently happened that the nominations of those whom he greatly desired confirmed, were rejected in the Senate by the united votes of Radicals and Whigs.

The controversy growing out of the election of a state printer to succeed Thurlow Weed increased the bitterness between the factions. Edwin Croswell had been removed from this office in 1840, and the Conservatives now proposed to reinstate him. Croswell had carefully avoided taking part in the factional contests then beginning to rend the party. He had supported, apparently in good faith, the "stop and tax law" of 1842, and, in the campaigns of 1841 and 1842, had been associated with Azariah C. Flagg in the publication of the *Rough Hewer,* a weekly paper of radical views, issued from the press of the *Argus;* but his sympathies were

with the Conservatives, and when they sought to re-elect him public printer, the Radicals, led by Flagg, announced as their candidate Henry H. Van Dyck, the owner, since 1840, of a one-third interest in the *Argus*. For seventeen years, from 1823 to 1840, Croswell had held the office of state printer, accumulating wealth and enjoying the regard of the party; and Flagg and his colleagues contended that he should now give way to another equally deserving. This was a strong reason in a party that believed in rotation in office, especially when coupled with a desire on the part of the Radicals to control the *Argus;* and, to avoid an open rupture, Croswell proposed that a law be passed making the *Argus* the state paper, without naming a public printer. Van Dyck objected to this, as it would leave Croswell in control of the establishment. Besides, Van Dyck claimed that, at the time he purchased an interest in the *Argus,* Croswell promised to support him for state printer. This Croswell denied.

Instantly, the air was alive with the thrill of battle. Croswell faced difficulties such as no other office-seeker had thus far encountered, difficulties of faction, difficulties of public sentiment, and difficulties of personnel. Flagg's conceded fidelity and honesty as a public officer, supplemented by his shrewdness and sagacity, made him the unquestioned leader of the Radicals; and, in this initial and crucial test of strength, he was indisposed to compromise or conciliate; but in Edwin Croswell he met the most impressive figure among the gladiators of the party. Croswell was the veteran editor whose judgment had guided its tactics, and whose words were instinct with life, with prophecy, and with fate. When he entered the pilot-house of his party, men knew something was going to happen. A perceptible hush seemed to announce his presence. At such times, his caustic sentences, clear and compact, were rarely conciliatory; but when he turned away from the wheel, achievement had proven his right to leadership.

In his contest with Flagg, however, Croswell encountered angry criticism from the Radicals and frigid approval from

some Conservatives. His candidacy plainly impaired the high respect which his conduct and abilities had brought him. It was a mistake from every point of view; but, once committed to such a course his Conservative friends persevered, giving him finally sixty-six out of one hundred and six votes cast. A speech made by Assemblyman Leland of Steuben affords an interesting glimpse of the many influences summoned from every quarter, until men found themselves in the centre of a political cauldron from which there seemed no escape. "All who have come up here for office," said Leland, "have been compelled to take one side or the other, and as neither side knows what will be the result, some have been disposed to cry 'good Lord, if a Lord, or good devil, if not a Lord.'" The newspapers added to the perils of the quarrel. In the discussion preceding the election, the Albany *Atlas,* a daily paper recently established, but until now without political prominence, became the organ of the Radicals; and between it and the *Argus* a fierce editorial battle, which extended to other Democratic papers throughout the State, made the factional division broader and more bitter.

Despite their quarrels, which continued throughout the legislative session, the Democrats, in the state election of November, 1843, carried two-thirds of the Assembly and five-sixths of the Senate. Nevertheless, the strength of the Conservatives was greatly increased. The utter and sudden abandonment of the canals, marked by a long line of tools left where the workmen dropped them, had played an important part in the campaign, and when the Democratic legislative caucus convened, in January, 1844, the friends of canal improvement easily defeated Michael Hoffman for speaker by a vote of fifty-six to thirty-five, in favour of Elisha Litchfield of Onondaga. Henry A. Foster, also an uncompromising champion of the Conservatives, was elected president *pro tem.* of the Senate. Litchfield had been in Congress. He was a strong man of acknowledged influence in the central counties of the State. Besides, he had been a faithful fol-

lower and an ardent admirer of Croswell. There were those who thought Horatio Seymour ought to be speaker; and, for a time, it looked as if he might secure the office. He was the real leader of the Conservatives, and he had more friends than Litchfield. But Litchfield had Croswell.

Backed by such a re-enforcement of Conservatives, Governor Bouck spoke of canal improvement with less timidity. He admitted the necessity of the tax law of 1842, but suggested the completion of "such new works as can be done with better economy than to sustain those designed to be superseded" and "are exposed to great and permanent injury." There was nothing forceful in this recommendation. He still kept the middle of the road, but his request practically amounted to the completion of some of the new work. It meant the finishing of the Schoharie aqueduct, improving the Jordan level, enlarging the locks of the Erie canal, and going on with the construction of the Black River and Genesee Valley canals.

The Radicals, realising the seriousness of the situation, now rested their hopes upon an elaborate report by Robert Dennison, chairman of the Senate canal committee. It was a telling blow. It attacked the estimated, as compared to the actual, cost of the canals, charging engineers with culpable ignorance or corrupt intention. The Chenango canal, it said, was estimated to cost $1,000,000; it actually cost $2,417,000. The first estimate of the Black River canal called for an expenditure of $437,000; after work was commenced, a recalculation made it $2,431,000. It cost, finally, over $2,800,000. The Genesee Valley canal presented even greater disparity, and more glaring ignorance. The original estimate fixed the cost at $1,774,000. Afterward, the same engineer computed it at $4,900,000; and it cost over $5,500,000. The State would have made money, the report said, had it built macadamised roads, instead of canals, at a cost of $4,000 a mile, and paid teamsters two dollars a day for hauling all the produce that the canals would transport when finished. In conclusion,

Dennison declared that work on the canals could not be resumed without laying an additional direct tax. This statement touched the pocket-books of the people; and, in the opinion of the Radicals, closed the discussion, for no Democrat, confronting a presidential and gubernatorial election, would dare burden his party with another direct canal tax.

Horatio Seymour, chairman of the canal committee of the Assembly, now appeared with a report, covering seventy-one octavo pages, which illuminated the question even to the enlightenment of Michael Hoffman. It was the first display of that mastery of legislative skill and power, which Seymour's shrewd discerning mind was so well calculated to acquire. The young Oneida statesman had been a favourite since his advent in the Assembly in 1842. His handsome face, made more attractive by large, luminous eyes, and a kind, social nature, peculiarly fitted him for public life; and, back of his fascinating manners, lay sound judgment and great familiarity with state affairs. Like Seward, he possessed, in this respect, an advantage over older members, and he was now to show something of the moral power which the Auburn Senator displayed when he displeased the short-sighted partisans who seemed to exist and to act only for the present.

In presenting his report Seymour was careful to sustain the pledges of the act of 1842, and to condemn the pre-existing policy of creating additional debts for the purpose of constructing new canals or enlarging the Erie. With gentle and cunning skill he commended Azariah C. Flagg's policy, adopted in 1835, of using only the surplus revenue of the canals for such purposes. "The errors we have committed," said his report, "are not without their utility or profitable teaching. The corruptions of extravagance and the bitter consequences of indebtedness, have produced their own correctives, and public opinion, admonished by the past, has returned to its accustomed and healthful channels, from which it will not be readily diverted. There is no portion of our citizens who desire to increase our state indebtedness, or to

do aught to the detriment of our common interests, when they are shown the evils that inevitably follow in the train of borrowing large sums of money, to be repaid, perhaps, in periods of pecuniary distress and embarrassment. Neither is it true, on the other hand, that any considerable number of our citizens are opposed to the extension of our canals when it can be effected by the aid of surplus revenues."[1]

This last sentence was the keynote. Bouck had suggested the principle, and other Conservatives had vainly tried to enforce it, but it remained for Seymour to obtain for it a fair and candid hearing. With great clearness, he unfolded the condition of the public works and of the public finances, and, with able reasoning, he showed that, out of the canal revenues, all the pledges of the act of 1842 could be met, and out of the surplus revenues, all the pledges of the act of 1836 could be completed. At the conclusion, he introduced a bill providing for the resumption of work along the lines set forth in the report.

The reports of Dennison and Seymour reduced the issue to its lowest terms. Dennison wanted the surplus revenues, if any, applied to the payment of the state debt; Seymour insisted upon their use for the enlargement of the Erie and the completion of the Black River and Genesee Valley canals. Both favoured a sinking fund, with which to extinguish the state debt, and both opposed the construction of any new work which should add to that debt. But Dennison, with pessimistic doggedness, denied that there would be sufficient surplus to produce the desired result. Seymour, with much of the optimism of Seward, cherished the hope that rich tolls, growing larger as navigation grew better, would flow into the treasury, until all the canals would be completed and all the debts wiped out. The Radical was more than a pessimist —he was a strict constructionist of the act of 1842. He held that the Seymour bill was a palpable departure from the policy of that act, and that other measures, soon to follow, would eventually overthrow such a policy. To all this Seymour re-

[1] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 412.

plied in his report, that "just views of political economy are not to be disseminated by harsh denunciations, which create the suspicion that there is more of hostility to the interests of those assailed than an honest desire to protect the treasury of the State."[2]

Hoffman and Seymour set the tone to the debate in the Assembly. They were, admittedly, the leaders of the two factions, and, although Hoffman possessed remarkable powers of denunciation, which he used freely against measures, his courtesy toward opponents was no less marked than Seymour's.[3] Other Conservatives supported the measure with ability. But it was Seymour's firmness of mind, suavity of manner, unwearied patience, and incomparable temper, under a thousand provocations, that made it possible to pass the bill, substantially as he wrote it, by a vote of sixty-seven to thirty-eight. Even Michael Hoffman refused to vote against it, although he did not vote for it.

The measure met fiercer opposition in the Senate. It had more acrid and irritable members than the Assembly, and its talkers had sharper tongues. In debate, Foster was the most formidable, but Albert Lester's acerbity of temper fixed the tone of the discussion. Finally, when the vote was taken the Democrats broke evenly for and against the measure; but, as five Whigs supported it, the bill finally passed, seventeen to thirteen.

It was a great victory for Seymour, then only thirty-four years old. Indeed, the history of the session may be described as the passage of a single measure by a single man whose success was based on supreme faith in the Erie canal. Seymour flowingly portrayed its benefits, and, with prophetic eye, saw the deeply ladened boats transporting the produce of prosperous farmers who had chosen homes in the West

[2] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 412.

[3] "One morning Hoffman rose to reply to Seymour, but on learning that he was ill he refused to deliver his speech for two or three days, till Seymour was able to be in his seat."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 175.

when access was rendered so easy. What seemed to others to threaten disaster to the State, appealed to him as a great highway of commerce that would yield large revenues to the Commonwealth and abundantly bless its people. He predicted the building of villages and the development of diversified industries along its banks, and, in one of his captivating sentences, he described the pleasure of travelling quickly by packets, viewing the scenery of the Mohawk Valley by day and sleeping comfortably in a cabin-berth at night. But he did not favour building so rapidly as to burden the State with debt. This was the mistake of the Seward administration, and the inevitable reaction gave the Radicals an argument for delay, and Dennison an opportunity for a telling report. Seymour put his faith in the earning capacity of the Erie canal. Forty years later, when he advocated the abolition of tolls, he found all his predictions more than verified.

CHAPTER VI

VAN BUREN DEFEATED AT BALTIMORE

1844

The canal contest and Horatio Seymour's success preceded many surprises and disappointments which were to be disclosed in the campaign of 1844. Never were the motions of the political pendulum more agitated or more irregular. For three years, public sentiment had designated Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren as the accepted candidates of their respective parties for President; and, until the spring of 1844, the confidence of the friends of the Kentucky statesman did not exceed the assurance of the followers of the ex-President. Indeed, the Democratic party was known throughout the country as the "Van Buren party," and, although James Buchanan, John C. Calhoun, and Lewis Cass had each been named as suitable persons for Chief Executive, the sage of Lindenwald was the party's recognised leader and prospective candidate. His sub-treasury scheme, accepted as wise and salutary, was still the corner-stone of the party, buttressed by a tariff for revenue and opposition to a national bank.

In national affairs, the Democratic party in New York was still a unit. The Legislature of 1843 had re-elected Silas Wright to the United States Senate, without a dissenting Democratic vote; and a state convention, held at Syracuse in September of the same year, and made up of Radicals and Conservatives, had instructed its delegation to support New York's favourite son. But a troublesome problem suddenly confronted Van Buren. President Tyler had secretly negotiated a treaty of annexation with Texas, ostensibly because of the contiguity and great value of its territory, in reality, because, as Cal-

houn, then secretary of state, showed in his correspondence with Great Britain, Texas seemed indispensable to the preservation and perpetuation of slavery. Texas had paved the way for such a treaty by providing, in its constitution, for the establishment of slavery, and by prohibiting the importation of slaves from any country other than the United States. But for three months friends of the treaty in the United States Senate had vainly endeavoured to find a two-thirds majority in favour of its ratification. Then, the exponents of slavery, having secretly brought to their support the enormous prestige of Andrew Jackson, prepared to nominate a successor to President Tyler who would favour the treaty.

Van Buren had never failed the South while in the United States Senate. He had voted against sending abolition literature through the mails into States that prohibited its circulation; he had approved the rules of the Senate for tabling abolition petitions without reading them; he had publicly deprecated the work of abolition leaders; and, by his silence, had approved the mob spirit when his friends were breaking up abolition meetings. But, in those days, American slavery was simply seeking its constitutional right to exist unmolested where it was; and, although the anti-slavery crusade from 1830 to 1840, had profoundly stirred the American conscience, slavery had not yet, to any extended degree, entered into partisan politics. The annexation of Texas, however, was an aggressive measure, the first of the great movements for the extension of slavery since the Missouri Compromise; and it was important to the South to know in advance where the ex-President stood. His administration had been adverse to annexation, and rumour credited him with unabated hostility. To force him into the open, therefore, William H. Hammit, a member of Congress from Mississippi, addressed him a letter on the 27th of March, 1844. "I am an unpledged delegate to the Baltimore convention," wrote Hammit, "and it is believed that a full and frank declaration of your opinion as to the constitutionality and expediency of immediately annexing Texas will be of great service to the

cause, at a moment so critical of its destiny."[1] Van Buren held this letter until the 20th of April, thirty-seven days before the meeting of the convention. When he did reply he recalled the fact that in 1837, after an exhaustive consideration of the question, his administration had decided against annexation, and that nothing had since occurred to change the situation; but that if, after the subject had been fully discussed, a Congress chosen with reference to the question showed that the popular will favoured it, he would yield. It was a letter of great length, elaborately discussing every point directly or indirectly relating to the subject.

Van Buren deeply desired the nomination, and if the South supported him he was practically certain of it. It was in view of the necessity of such support that Van Buren's letter has been pronounced by a recent biographer "one of the finest and bravest pieces of political courage, and deserves from Americans a long admiration."[2] Such eulogy is worthily bestowed if Van Buren, at the time of the Hammit letter, fully appreciated the gravity of the situation; but there is no evidence that he understood the secret and hostile purpose which led up to the Hammit inquiry, and the letter itself is evidence that he sought to conciliate the Southern wing of his party. Charles Jared Ingersoll of Pennsylvania, in his diary of May 6, 1844, declares that nearly all of Van Buren's admirers and most of the Democratic press were even then committed to annexation. Nevertheless, Van Buren and his trusted advisers could not have known of the secret plotting of Buchanan's and Cass's followers, or of the deception shrewdly practised by Cave Johnson of Tennessee, ostensibly a confidential friend, but really a leader in the plot to defeat Van Buren.[3] Besides, the sentiment of the country un-

[1] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3. p. 441.

[2] Edward M. Shepard, *Life of Martin Van Buren*, p. 407.

[3] "Judge Fine, Mr. Butler, and other members of the New York delegation, reposed great confidence in the opinions and statements of Mr. Cave Johnson, of Tennessee. He frequently met with the delegation, and expressed himself in the strongest terms of

mistakably recognised that powerful and weighty as the inducements for annexation appeared, they were light when opposed in the scale of reason to the treaty of amity and commerce with Mexico, which must be scrupulously observed so long as that country performed its duties and respected treaty rights. Even after the nomination of a President only sixteen senators out of fifty-one voted for annexation, proving that the belief still obtained, in the minds of a very large and influential portion of the party, that annexation was decidedly objectionable, since it must lead, as Benton put it in his great speech delivered in May, 1844, to an unjust, unconstitutional war with Mexico upon a weak and groundless pretext. Thus, Van Buren had behind him, the weight of the argument, a large majority of the Senate, including Silas Wright, his noble friend, and a party sentiment that had not yet yielded to the crack of the southern whip; and he was ignorant of the plan, already secretly matured, to defeat him with the help of the followers of Buchanan and Cass by insisting upon the two-thirds rule in the convention. Under these circumstances, it did not require great courage to reaffirm his previous views so forcibly and ably expressed. Cognisant, however, of the growing desire in the South for annexation, he took good care to remove the impression that he was a hard-shell, by promising to yield his opinion to the judgment of a

personal and political friendship towards Mr. Van Buren and Mr. Wright. He said he regretted that the Democratic convention in Tennessee had not named Mr. Van Buren as the candidate. So strong was the confidence in Mr. Johnson as a friend of Mr. Van Buren, that he was apprised of all our plans in regard to the organisation of the convention, and was requested to nominate Gov. Hubbard of New Hampshire, as temporary chairman. But when the convention assembled Gen. Saunders of North Carolina called the convention to order and nominated Hendrick B. Wright, of Pennsylvania, a friend of Mr. Buchanan, as temporary president. Messrs. Walker, Saunders, and Cave Johnson were the principal managers for the delegates from the southern section of the Union."—Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 447.

new Congress. This was a long step in the direction of consent. It virtually said, "If you elect a Congress that will ratify the treaty and pay the price, I will not stand in your way." In the presence of such complacency, the thought naturally occurs that he might have gone a step farther and consented to yield his opinions at once had he known or even suspected the secret plans of his southern opponents, the bitterness of Calhoun and Robert J. Walker, and their understanding with the friends of Buchanan and Cass. Jackson's letter favourable to annexation, skilfully procured for publication just before the convention, "to blow Van out of water," as his enemies expressed it, was, indeed, known to Van Buren, but the latter believed its influence discounted by the great confidence Jackson subsequently expressed in his wisdom.[4]

Three days before the date of Van Buren's letter, Henry Clay, writing upon the same subject, expressed the opinion that annexation at this time, without the assent of Mexico. would be a measure "compromising the national character, involving us certainly in war with Mexico, probably with other foreign powers, dangerous to the integrity of the Union, inexpedient to the present financial condition of the country, and not called for by any general expression of public opinion." Van Buren had visited Clay at Ashland in 1842, and, after the publication of their letters, it was suggested that a bargain had then been made to remove the question of annexation from politics. However this may be, the friends of the ex-President, after the publication of his letter, understood, quickly and fully, the gravity of the situation. Subterranean

[4] "The danger of Van Buren's difference with Jackson it was sought to avert. Butler visited Jackson at the Hermitage, and doubtless showed him for what sinister end he had been used. Jackson did not withdraw his approval of annexation; but publicly declared his regard for Van Buren to be so great, his confidence in Van Buren's love of country to be so strengthened by long intimacy, that no difference about Texas could change his opinion. But the work of Calhoun and Robert J. Walker had been too well done."—Edward M. Shepard, *Life of Martin Van Buren*, p. 407.

activity was at its height all through the month of May. Men wavered and changed, and changed again. So great was the alarm that leading men of Ohio addressed their delegation in Congress, insisting upon Van Buren's support. It was a moment of great peril. The agitators themselves became frightened. A pronounced reaction in favour of Van Buren threatened to defeat their plans, and the better to conceal intrigue and tergiversation they deemed it wise to create the belief that opposition had been wholly and finally abandoned. In this they proved eminently successful. "Many of the strongest advocates of annexation," wrote a member of the New York delegation in Congress, on May 18, nine days before the convention, "have come to regard the grounds taken by Van Buren as the only policy consistent not only with the honour, but the true interests of the country. Such is fast becoming and will soon be the opinion of the whole South."[5] But the cloud, at last, burst. No sooner had the Baltimore convention convened than Benjamin F. Butler, the ardent friend and able spokesman of Van Buren, discovered that the backers of Cass and Buchanan were acting with the Southerners in the interest of a rule that required two-thirds of all the delegates in the convention to nominate. Instantly the air was thick with suggestion, devices, expedients. All the arts of party emergency went on at an unprecedented rate. The eloquent New Yorker, his clear, tenor voice trembling with emotion, fought the battle on the highest moral grounds.

With inexhaustible tenacity, force, and resource, he laboured to hold up to men's imagination and to burn into their understanding the shame and dishonour of adopting a rule, not only unsound and false in principle, but which, if adhered to, would coerce a majority to yield to a minority. "I submit," declared Butler, in closing, "that to adopt a rule which requires what we know cannot be done, unless the majority yield to the minority, is to subject ourselves to the rule, not of reason, but of despotism, and to defeat the true

[5] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 444.

purposes and objects of this convention—the accomplishment of the people's will for the promotion of the people's good." [6]

The adoption of the rule, by a vote of 148 to 118, showed that the Democratic party did not have a passionate devotion for Martin Van Buren. Buchanan opposed his nomination; leading men in other States did not desire him. The New England States, with Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, had instructed for him; yet sixty-three of these instructed delegates voted for the two-thirds rule, knowing that its adoption would defeat him. The rule received thirty majority, and

[6] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 450.

"The real contest took place over the adoption of the rule requiring a two-thirds vote for the nomination. For it was through this rule that enough Southern members, chosen before Van Buren's letter, were to escape obedience to their instructions to vote for him. Robert J. Walker, then a senator from Mississippi, a man of interesting history and large ability, led the Southerners. He quoted the precedent of 1832 when Van Buren had been nominated for the Vice Presidency under the two-thirds rule, and that of 1835, when he had been nominated for the Presidency. These nominations had led to victory. In 1840 the rule had not been adopted. Without this rule, he said amid angry excitement, the party would yield to those whose motto seemed to be 'rule or ruin.' Butler, Daniel S. Dickinson, and Marcus Morton led the Northern ranks. . . . Morton said that under the majority rule Jefferson had been nominated; that rule had governed state, county, and township conventions. Butler admitted that under the rule Van Buren would not be nominated, although a majority of the convention was known to be for him. In 1832 and 1835 the two-thirds rule had prevailed because it was certainly known who would be nominated; and the rule operated to aid not to defeat the majority. If the rule were adopted, it would be by the votes of States which were not Democratic, and would bring 'dismemberment and final breaking up of the party.' Walker laughed at Butler's 'tall vaulting' from the floor; and, refusing to shrink from the Van Buren issue, he protested against New York dictation, and warningly said that, if Van Buren were nominated, Clay would be elected."—Edward M. Shepard, *Life of Martin Van Buren*, p. 408.

Van Buren, on the first ballot, received only thirteen. On the second ballot he dropped to less than a majority; on the seventh he had only ninety-nine votes. The excitement reached a climax when a motion to declare him the nominee by a majority vote, was ruled out of order. In the pandemonium, the New Yorkers, for the first time, seemed to unloose themselves, letting fly bitter denunciations of the treachery of the sixty-three delegates who were pledged to Van Buren's support. When order was restored, a Virginian suddenly put forward the name of James K. Polk as that of "a pure, whole-hogged Democrat." Then the convention adjourned until the next day.

Harmony usually follows a bitter convention quarrel. Men become furiously and sincerely indignant; but the defeated ones must accept the results, or, Samson-like, destroy themselves in the destruction of their party. The next morning, Daniel S. Dickinson, the most violently indignant the day before, declared that "he loved this convention because it had acted so like the masses." In a high state of nervous excitement, Samuel Young had denounced "the abominable Texas question" as the firebrand thrown among them, but his manner now showed that he, also, had buried the hatchet. Even the serene, philosophic Butler, who, in "an ecstacy of painful excitement," had "leaped from the floor and stamped," to use the language of an eye-witness, now resumed his wonted calmness, and on the ninth ballot, in the midst of tremendous cheering, used the discretion vested in him to withdraw Van Buren's name. In doing so, he took occasion to indicate his preference for James K. Polk, his personal friend. Following this announcement, Dickinson cast New York's thirty-five votes for the Tennesseean, who immediately received the necessary two-thirds vote. The situation had given Polk peculiar advantages. The partisans of Cass and Buchanan, having willingly defeated Van Buren, made the friends of the New Yorker thirsty to put their knives into these betrayers. This situation, opening the door for a compromise, brought a "dark horse" into the race for

the first time in the history of national conventions. Such conditions are common enough nowadays, but it may well be doubted if modern political tactics ever brought to the surface a more inferior candidate. "Polk! Great God, what a nomination!" wrote Governor Letcher of Kentucky to Buchanan.

To make the compromise complete, the convention, by acclamation, nominated Silas Wright for Vice President. But the man who had recently declined a nomination to the Supreme Court of the United States, and who, after the defeat of Van Buren, had refused the use of his name for President, did not choose, he said, "to ride behind the black pony." A third ballot resulted in the selection of George M. Dallas of Pennsylvania. Among the resolutions adopted, it was declared that "our title to the whole of Oregon is clear and unquestionable; that no portion of the same ought to be ceded to England or any other power; and the reoccupation of Oregon and the reannexation of Texas at the earliest practicable period, are great American measures, which the convention recommends to the cordial support of the Democracy of the Union."

Van Buren's defeat practically closed his career. His failure of re-election in 1840 had left his leadership unimpaired, but with the loss of the nomination in 1844 went prestige and power which he was never to regain. Seldom has it been the misfortune of a candidate for President to experience so overwhelming an overthrow. Clay's failure in 1839 and Seward's in 1860 were as complete; but they lacked the humiliating features of the Baltimore rout. Harrison was an equal favourite with Clay in 1839; and at Chicago, in 1860, Lincoln shared with Seward the prominence of a leading candidate; but at Baltimore, in 1844, no other name than Van Buren's appeared conspicuously above the surface, until, with the help of delegates who had been instructed for him, the two-thirds rule was adopted. It seemed to Van Buren the result of political treachery; and it opened a chasm between him and his former southern friends that was destined to survive

during the remaining eighteen years of his life. The proscription of his New York friends undoubtedly aided this division, and the death of Jackson, in 1845, and rapidly accumulating political events which came to a climax in 1848, completed the separation.

There are evidences that Van Buren's defeat did not break the heart of his party in New York. Contemporary writers intimate that after his election as President the warm, familiar manners changed to the stiffer and more formal ways of polite etiquette, and that his visit to New York, during his occupancy of the White House, left behind it many wounds, the result of real or fancied slights and neglect. Van Buren's rule had been long. His good pleasure sent men to Congress; his good pleasure made them postmasters, legislators, and cabinet officers. In all departments of the government, both state and national, his influence had been enormous. For years his friends, sharing the glory and profits of his continued triumphs, had been filling other ambitious men with envy and jealousy, until his overthrow seemed necessary to their success. Even Edwin Croswell shared this feeling, and, although he did not boldly play a double part, the astute editor was always seeking a position which promised the highest advantage and the greatest security to himself and his faction. This condition of mind made him quick to favour Polk and the annexation of Texas, and to leave Van Buren to his now limited coterie of followers.

Van Buren had much liking for the career of a public man. Very probably he found his greatest happiness in the triumphs of such a life; but we must believe he also found great contentment in his retirement at Lindenwald. He did not possess the tastes and pleasures of a man of letters, nor did he affect the "classic retirement" that seemed to appeal so powerfully to men of the eighteenth century; but, like John Jay, he loved the country, happy in his health, in his rustic tastes, in his freedom from public cares, and in his tranquil occupation. Skilled in horticulture, he took pleasure in planting trees, and in cultivating, with his own hand,

the fruits and flowers of his table. There can be no doubt of his entire sincerity when he assured an enthusiastic Pennsylvania admirer, who had pronounced for him as a candidate in 1848, that whatever aspirations he may have had in the past, he now had no desire to be President.

CHAPTER VII

SILAS WRIGHT AND MILLARD FILLMORE

1844

The New York delegation, returning from the Baltimore convention, found the Democratic party rent in twain over the gubernatorial situation. So long as Van Buren seemed likely to be the candidate for President, opposition to Governor Bouck's renomination was smothered by the desire of the Radicals to unite with the Conservatives, and thus make sure of the State's electoral vote. This was the Van Buren plan. After the latter's defeat, however, the Radicals demanded the nomination of Silas Wright of Canton. Van Buren and Wright had taken no part in the canal controversy; but they belonged to the Radicals, and, with Wright, and with no one else, could the latter hope to defeat the "Agricultural Governor." Their importunity greatly distressed the Canton statesman, who desired to remain in the United States Senate, to which he had been recently re-elected for a third term, and to whom, from every point of view, the governorship was distasteful.[1] Besides taking him from the Senate, it meant

[1] "Next to the Presidency no place was so much desired, in the times we are now reviewing, as that of senator of the United States. The body was illustrious through the fame of its members, who generally exhibited the very flower and highest outcome of American political life; dignified, powerful, respected, it was the pride of the nation, and one of its main bulwarks. The height of ordinary ambition was satisfied by attainment to that place; and men once securely seated there would have been content to hold it on and on, asking no more. One cannot doubt the sincerity of the expressions in which Mr. Wright announced his distress at being thrown from that delightful eminence into the whirlpools and quicksands at Albany."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John Dix*, Vol. 1, pp. 194, 195.

contention with two bitterly jealous and hostile factions, one of which would be displeased with impartiality, the other ready to plunge the party into a fierce feud on the slightest show of partiality. Therefore, he firmly declined to be a candidate.

But the Albany *Atlas,* representing the Radicals, insisted upon Wright's making the sacrifice; and, to give Bouck an easy avenue of escape, Edwin Croswell, representing the Conservatives, advised that the Governor would withdraw if he should consent to stand. But he again refused. Still the *Atlas* continued to insist. By the middle of July things looked very black. In Albany, the atmosphere became thick with political passion. Finally, Van Buren interfered. He was profoundly affected with the idea that political treachery had compassed his defeat, and he knew the nomination of Polk was personally offensive to Silas Wright; but, faithful to his promise to support the action of the Baltimore convention, he requested his friend to lead the state ticket, since the result in New York would probably decide, as it did decide, the fate of the Democratic party in the nation. Still the Senator refused. His decision, more critical than he seemed to be aware, compelled his Radical friends to invent new compromises, until the refusal was modified into a conditional consent. In other words, he would accept the nomination provided he was not placed in the position of opposing "any Republican who is, or who may become a candidate."

This action of the Radicals kept the Conservatives busy bailing a sinking boat. They believed the candidacy of Bouck would shut out Wright under the terms of his letter, and, although the Governor's supporters were daily detached by the action of county conventions, and the Governor himself wished to withdraw to avoid the humiliation of a defeat by ballot, the Conservatives continued their opposition. For once it could be truthfully said of a candidate that he was "in the hands of his friends." Even the "judicious" delegate, whom the Governor directed to withdraw his name, declined executing the commission until a ballot had nomi-

nated Wright, giving him ninety-five votes to thirty for Bouck. "Wright's nomination is the fatality," wrote Seward. "Election or defeat exhausts him."[2] Seward had the gift of prophecy.

The bitterness of the contest was further revealed in the refusal of Daniel S. Dickinson, a doughty Conservative, to accept a renomination for lieutenant-governor, notwithstanding Silas Wright had especially asked it. There were many surmises, everybody was excited, and the door to harmony seemed closed forever; but it opened again when the name of Addison Gardiner of Rochester came up. Gardiner had been guided by high ideals. He was kind and tolerant; the voice of personal anger was never heard from his lips; and Conservative and Radical held him in high respect. At Manlius, in 1821, Gardiner had become the closest friend of Thurlow Weed, an intimacy that was severed only by death. He was a young lawyer then, anxious to seek his fortune in the West, and on his way to Indianapolis happened to stop at Rochester. The place proved too attractive to give up, and, through his influence, Weed also made it his residence. "How curious it seems," he once wrote his distinguished journalistic friend, "that circumstances which we regard at the time as scarcely worthy of notice often change the entire current of our lives." A few years later, through Weed's influence, Gardiner became a judge of the Supreme Court, laying the foundation for a public life of honourable and almost unceasing activity.

Though the Whigs needed their ablest and most popular

[2] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 723.

"Wright was a strong man the day before his nomination for governor. He fell far, and if left alone will be not, what he might have been, George I. to William of Orange, lineal heir to Jackson, through Van Buren. The wiseacres in New York speak of him with compliment, 'this distinguished statesman;' yet they bring all their small artillery to bear upon him, and give notice that he is demolished. The praise they bestow is very ill concealed, but less injurious to us than their warfare, conducted in their mode."—Letter of W. H. Seward to Thurlow Weed, *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 725.

men to meet Wright and Gardiner, preceding events guided the action of their state convention, which met at Syracuse, on the 11th of September, 1844. Horace Greeley had picked out Millard Fillmore for the Vice Presidency on the ticket with Henry Clay, and his New York friends, proud of his work in Congress, as chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, presented his name with the hope that other States, profiting by the tariff which he had framed, might join them in recognising his valuable public service. But the convention had not taken kindly to him, probably for the same reason that Greeley desired his promotion; for, upon the slavery question, Fillmore had been more pronounced and aggressive than Seward, sympathising and acting in Congress with Giddings of Ohio and John P. Hale of New Hampshire, a part very difficult to perform in those days without losing caste as a Whig.

Fillmore's defeat on May 1, however, made him the candidate for governor on September 11. Weed pronounced for him very early, and the party leaders fell into line with a unanimity that must have been as balm to Fillmore's sores. "I wish to say to you," wrote George W. Patterson to Weed, "that you are right, as usual, on the question of governor. After Frelinghuysen was named for Vice President, it struck me that Fillmore above all others was the man. You may rest assured that he will help Mr. Clay to a large number of good men's votes. Mr. Clay's slaves and his old duel would have hurt him with some men who will now vote the ticket. Fillmore is a favourite everywhere; and among the Methodists where 'old Father Fillmore' is almost worshipped, they will go him with a rush."[3] Yet the Buffalo statesman, not a little disgruntled over his treatment at Baltimore, disclaimed any desire for the nomination. To add to his chagrin, he was told that Weed and Seward urged his selection for his destruction, and whether he believed the tale or not, it increased his fear and apprehension. But people did not take his assumed indifference seriously, and he was unanimously

[3] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 121.

nominated for governor, with Samuel J. Wilkin, of Orange, for lieutenant-governor. Wilkin had been a leader of the Adams party in the Assembly of 1824 and 1825. He was then a young lawyer of much promise, able and clear-headed, and, although never a showy debater, he possessed useful business talent, and an integrity that gave him high place among the men who guided his party. "I like Wilkin for lieutenant-governor," wrote Seward, although he had been partial to the selection of John A. King.

Without doubt, each party had put forward, for governor, its most available man. Fillmore was well known and at the height of his popularity. During the protracted and exciting tariff struggle of 1842, he had sustained himself as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee with marked ability. It added to his popularity, too, that he had seemed indifferent to the nomination. In some respects Fillmore and Silas Wright were not unlike. They were distinguished for their suavity of manners. Both were impressive and interesting characters, wise in council, and able in debate, with a large knowledge of their State and country; and, although belonging to opposite parties and in different wings of the capitol at Washington, their service in Congress had brought to the debates a genius which compelled attention, and a purity of life that raised in the public estimation the whole level of congressional proceedings. Neither was an orator; they were clear, forcible, and logical; but their speeches were not quoted as models of eloquence. In spite of an unpleasant voice and a slow, measured utterance, there was a charm about Wright's speaking; for, like Fillmore, he had earnestness and warmth. With all their power, however, they lacked the enthusiasm and the boldness that captivate the crowd and inspire majorities. Yet they had led majorities. In no sphere of Wright's activities, was he more strenuous than in the contest for the independent treasury plan which he recommended to Van Buren, and which, largely through his efforts as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, was finally forced into law on the 4th of July, 1840. Fill-

more, in putting some of the hated taxes of 1828 into the tariff act of 1842, was no less strenuous, grappling facts with infinite labour, until, at last, he overcame a current of public opinion that seemed far too powerful for resistance.

Of the two men, Silas Wright was undoubtedly the stronger character. He was five years older than Fillmore, and his legislative experience had been four or five years longer. His great intellectual power peculiarly fitted him for the United States Senate. He had chosen finance as his specialty, and in its discussion had made a mark. He could give high and grave counsel in great emergencies. His inexhaustible patience, his active attention and industry, his genius in overcoming impediments of every kind, made him the peer of the ablest senator. He was not without ambitions for himself; but they were always subordinate in him to the love of party and friends. It will never be known how far he influenced Van Buren's reply to Hammit. He bitterly opposed the annexation of Texas, and his conferences with the ex-President must have encouraged the latter's adherence to his former position. Van Buren's defeat, however, in no wise changed Wright's attitude toward him. It is doubtful if the latter could have been nominated President at Baltimore had he allowed the use of his name, but it was greatly to his credit, showing the sincerity of his friendship for Van Buren, that he spurned the suggestion and promptly declined a unanimous nomination for Vice President. Such action places him in a very small group of American statesmen who have deliberately turned their backs upon high office rather than be untrue to friends.

Silas Wright was strictly a party man. He came near subjecting every measure and every movement in his career to the test of party loyalty. He started out in that way, and he kept it up until the end. In 1823 he sincerely favoured the choice of presidential electors by the people, but, for the party's sake, he aided in defeating the measure. Two years later, he preferred that the State be unrepresented in the United States Senate rather than permit the election of Am-

brose Spencer, then the nominee of a Clintonian majority, and he used all his skill to defeat a joint session of the two houses. For the sake of party he now accepted the gubernatorial nomination. Desire to remain in the Senate, opposition to the annexation of Texas, dislike of participating in factional feuds, refusal to stand in the way of Bouck's nomination, the dictates of his better judgment, all gave way to party necessity. He anticipated defeat for a second term should he now be elected to a first, but it had no influence. The party needed him, and, whatever the result to himself, he met it without complaint. This was the man upon whom the Democrats relied to carry New York and to elect Polk.

There were other parties in the field. The Native Americans, organised early in 1844, watched the situation with peculiar emotions. This party had suddenly sprung up in opposition to the ease with which foreigners secured suffrage and office; and, although it shrewdly avoided nominations for governor and President, it demoralised both parties by the strange and tortuous manœuvres that had ended in the election of a mayor of New York in the preceding spring. It operated, for the most part, in that city, but its sympathisers covered the whole State. Then, there was the anti-rent party, confined to Delaware and three or four adjoining counties, where long leases and trifling provisions of forfeiture had exasperated tenants into acts of violence. Like the Native Americans, these Anti-Renters avoided state and national nominations, and traded their votes to secure the election of legislative nominees.

But the organisation which threatened calamity was the abolition or liberty party. It had nominated James G. Birney of Michigan for President and Alvan Stewart for governor, and, though no one expected the election of either, the organisation was not unlikely to hold the balance of power in the State. Stewart was a born Abolitionist and a lawyer of decided ability. In the section of the State bounded by Oneida and Otsego counties, where he shone conspicuously as a leader for a quarter of a century, his forensic achieve-

ments are still remembered. Stanton says he had no superior in central New York. "His quaint humour was equal to his profound learning. He was skilled in a peculiar and indescribable kind of argumentation, wit, and sarcasm, that made him remarkably successful out of court as well as in court. Before anti-slavery conventions in several States he argued grave and intricate constitutional questions with consummate ability."[4]

It was evident that the Anti-Renters and Native Americans would draw, perhaps, equally from Whigs and Democrats; but the ranks of Abolitionists could be recruited only from the anti-slavery Whigs. Behind Stewart stood Gerrit Smith, William Jay, Beriah Green, and other zealous, able, benevolent, pure-minded men—some of them wealthy. Their shibboleth was hostility to a slave-holder, or one who would vote for a slave-holder. This barred Henry Clay and his electors.

At the outset the Whigs plainly had the advantage. Spring elections had resulted auspiciously, and the popularity of Clay seemed unfailing. He had avowed opposition to the annexation of Texas, and, although his letter was not based upon hostility to slavery and the slave trade, it was positive, highly patriotic, and in a measure satisfactory to the anti-slavery Wigs. "We are at the flood," Seward wrote Weed; "our opponents at the ebb."[5] The nomination of Wright had greatly strengthened the Democratic ticket, but the nomination of Polk, backed by the Texas resolution, weighted the party as with a ball and chain. Edwin Croswell had characterised Van Buren's letter to Hammit as "a statesman-like production," declaring that "every American reader, not entirely under the dominion of prejudice, will admit the force of his conclusions."[6] This was the view generally held by the party throughout the State; yet, within a month, every American reader who wished to remain loyal to

[4] H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 135.

[5] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 699.

[6] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 441, *note.*

the Democratic party was compelled to change his mind. In making this change, the "slippery-elm editor," as Croswell came to be known because of the nearness of his office to the old elm tree corner in Albany, led the way and the party followed. It was a rough road for many who knew they were consigning to one grave all hope of ending the slavery agitation, while they were resurrecting from another, bitter and dangerous controversies that had been laid to rest by the Missouri Compromise. Yet only one poor little protest, and that intended for private circulation, was heard in opposition, the signers, among them William Cullen Bryant, declaring their intention to vote for Polk, but to repudiate any candidate for Congress who agreed with Polk. Bryant's purpose was palpable and undoubted; but it soon afterward became part of his courage not to muffle plain truth from any spurious notions of party loyalty, and part of his glory not to fail to tell what people could not fail to see.

As the campaign advanced, the Whig side of it resembled the contest of 1840. The log cabin did not reappear, and the drum and cannon were less noisy, but ash poles, cut from huge trees and spliced one to another, carried high the banner of the statesman from Ashland. Campaign songs, with choruses for "Harry of the West," emulated those of "Old Tip," and parades by day and torchlight processions by night, increased the enthusiasm. The Whigs, deeply and personally attached to Henry Clay, made mass-meetings as common and nearly as large as those held four years before. Seward speaks of fifteen thousand men gathered at midday in Utica to hear Erastus Root, and of a thousand unable to enter the hall at night while he addressed a thousand more within. Fillmore expressed the fear that Whigs would mistake these great meetings for the election, and omit the necessary arrangements to get the vote out. "I am tired of mass-meetings," wrote Seward. "But they will go on."[7]

Seward and Weed were not happy during this campaign. The friends of Clay, incensed at his defeat in 1840, had pro-

[7] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 723.

nounced them the chief conspirators. Murmurs had been muffled until after Tyler's betrayal of the party and Seward's retirement, but when these sources of possible favours ran dry, the voice of noisy detraction reached Albany and Auburn. It was not an ordinary scold, confined to a few conservatives; but the censure of strong language, filled with vindictiveness, charged Weed with revolutionary theories, tending to unsettle the rights of property, and Seward with abolition notions and a desire to win the Irish Catholic vote for selfish purposes. In February, 1844, it was not very politely hinted to Seward that he go abroad during the campaign; and by June, Weed talked despondingly, proposing to leave the *Journal*. Seward had the spirit of the Greeks. "If you resign," he said, "there will be no hope left for ten thousand men who hold on because of their confidence in you and me."[8] In another month Weed had become the proprietor as well as the editor of the *Evening Journal*.

As the campaign grew older, however, Clay's friends gladly availed themselves of Seward's influence with anti-slavery Whigs and naturalised citizens. "It is wonderful what an impulse the nomination of Polk has given to the abolition sentiment," wrote Seward. "It has already expelled other

[8] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 719.

"I think you cannot leave the *Journal* without giving up the whole army to dissension and overthrow. I agree that if, by remaining, you save it, you only draw down double denunciation upon yourself and me. Nor do I see the way through and beyond that. But there will be some way through. I grant, then, that, for yourself and me, it is wise and profitable that you leave. I must be left without the possibility of restoration, without a defender, without an organ. Nothing else will satisfy those who think they are shaded. Then, and not until then, shall I have passed through the not unreasonable punishment for too much success. But the party —the country? They cannot bear your withdrawal. I think I am not mistaken in this. Let us adhere, then. Stand fast. It is neither wise nor reasonable that we should bear the censure of defeat, when we have been deprived of not merely command, but of a voice in council."—W. H. Seward to Thurlow Weed, *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 720.

issues from the public mind. Our Whig central committee, who, a year ago, voted me out of the party for being an Abolitionist, has made abolition the war-cry in their call for a mass-meeting."[9] Even the sleuth-hounds of No-popery were glad to invite Seward to address the naturalised voters, whose hostility to the Whigs, in 1844, resembled their dislike of the Federalists in 1800. "It is a sorry consolation for this ominous aspect of things," he wrote Weed, "that you and I are personally exempt from the hostility of this class toward our political associates."[10]

Yet no man toiled more sedulously in this campaign than Seward. "Harrison had his admirers, Clay his lovers," is the old way of putting it. To elect him, Whigs were ready to make any sacrifice, to endure any hardship, and to yield every prejudice. Fillmore was ubiquitous, delivering tariff and anti-Texas speeches that filled all mouths with praise and all hearts with principle, as Seward expressed it. An evident desire existed on the part of many in both parties, to avoid a discussion of the annexation of Texas, and its consequent extension of slavery, lest too much or too little be said; but leaders like Seward and Fillmore were too wise to believe that they could fool the people by concealing the real issue. "Texas and slavery are at war with the interests, the principles, the sympathies of all," boldly declared the unmuzzled Auburn statesman. "The integrity of the Union depends on the result. To increase the slave-holding power is to subvert the Constitution; to give a fearful preponderance which may, and probably will, be speedily followed by demands to which the Democratic free-labour States cannot yield, and the denial of which will be made the ground of secession, nullification and disunion."[11] This was another of Seward's famous prophecies. At the time it seemed extravagant, even to the strongest anti-slavery Whigs, but the future verified it.

[9] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 718.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 723.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 727.

The Whigs, however, did not, as in 1840, have a monopoly of the enthusiasm. The public only half apprehended, or refused to apprehend at all, the danger in the Texas scheme; and, after the first chill of their immersion, the Democrats rallied with confidence to the support of their ticket. Abundant evidence of their strength had manifested itself at each state election since 1841, and, although no trailing cloud of glory now testified to a thrifty and skilful management, as in 1836, the two factions, in spite of recent efforts to baffle and defeat each other, pulled themselves together with amazing quickness. Indeed, if we may rely upon Whig letters of the time, the Democrats exhibited the more zeal and spirit throughout the campaign. They had their banners, their songs, and their processions. In place of ash, they raised hickory poles, and instead of defending Polk, they attacked Clay. Other candidates attracted little attention. Clay was the commanding, central figure, and over him the battle raged. There were two reasons for this. One was the fear of a silent free-soil vote, which the Bryant circular had alarmed in his favour. The other was a desire to strengthen the liberty party, and to weaken the Whigs by holding up Clay as a slave-holder. The corner-stone of that party was hostility to the slave-holder; and if a candidate, however much he opposed slavery, owned a single slave, it excluded him from its suffrage. This was the weak point in Clay's armour, and the one of most peril to the Whigs. To meet it, the latter argued, with some show of success, that the conflict is not with one slave-holder, or with many, but with slavery; and since the admission of Texas meant the extension of that institution, a vote for Clay, who once advocated emancipation in Kentucky and is now strongly opposed to Texas, is a vote in behalf of freedom.

In September, Whig enthusiasm underwent a marked decline. Clay's July letter to his Alabama correspondent, as historic now as it was superfluous and provoking then, had been published, in which he expressed a wish to see Texas added to the Union "upon just and fair terms."

and hazarded the opinion that "the subject of slavery ought not to affect the question one way or the other."[12] This letter was the prototype of the famous alliteration, "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion," in the Blaine campaign of 1884. Immediately Clay's most active anti-slavery supporters were in revolt. "We had the Abolitionists in a good way," wrote Washington Hunt from Lockport; "but Mr. Clay seems determined that they shall not be allowed to vote for him. I believe his letter will lose us more than two hundred votes in this county."[13] The effects of the dreadful blow are as briefly summed up by Seward: "I met *that letter* at Geneva, and thence here, and now everybody droops, despairs. It jeopards, perhaps loses, the State."[14] A few weeks later, in company with several friends, Seward, as was his custom, made an estimate of majorities, going over the work several times and taking accurate account of the drift of public sentiment. An addition of the columns showed the Democrats several thousands ahead. Singularly enough, Fillmore, whose accustomed despondency exhibited itself even in 1840, now became confident of success. This can be accounted for, perhaps, on the theory that to a candidate the eve of an election is "dim with the self-deceiving twilight of sophistry." He believed in his own safety even if Clay failed. Although the deep, burning issue of slavery had not yet roused popular forces into dangerous excitement, Fillmore had followed the lead of Giddings and Hale, sympathising deeply with the restless flame that eventually guided the policy of the North with such admirable effect. On the other hand, Wright approved his party's doctrine of non-interference with slavery. He had uniformly voted to table petitions for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, declaring that any interference with the system, in that district, or in the territories, endangered

[12] Private letter, Henry Clay to Stephen Miller, Tuscaloosa, Ala., July 1, 1844.

[13] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 123.

[14] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 724.

the rights of their citizens, and would be a violation of faith toward those who had settled and held slaves there. He voted for the admission of Arkansas and Florida as slave States; and his opposition to Texas was based wholly upon reasons other than the extension of slavery. The Abolitionists understood this, and Fillmore confidently relied upon their aid, although they might vote for Birney instead of Clay.

That Seward rightly divined public sentiment was shown by the result. Polk carried the State by a plurality of little more than five thousand, and Wright by ten thousand, while Stewart polled over fifteen thousand votes.[15] These last figures told the story. Four years before, Birney had received less than seven thousand votes in the whole country; now, in New York, the Abolitionists, exceeding their own anticipations, held the balance of power.[16] Had their votes been cast for Clay and Fillmore both would have carried New York, and Clay would have become the Chief Executive. "Until Mr. Clay wrote his letter to Alabama," said Thurlow Weed, dispassionately, two years afterward, "his election as President was certain."[17]

Clay's defeat was received by his devoted followers as the knell of their hopes. For years they had been engaged labouriously in rolling uphill the stone of Sisyphus, making active friendships and seeking a fair trial. That opportunity had come at last. It had been an affair of life or death; the contest was protracted, intense, dramatic; the issue for a time had hung in poignant doubt; but the dismal result let the stone roll down again to the bottom of the hill. No wonder stout men cried, and that thousands declared the loss of all further interest in politics. To add to their despair and resentment, the party of Birney and Stewart exulted over its victory not less than the party of Polk and Silas Wright.

[15] Silas Wright, 241,090; Millard Fillmore, 231,057; Alvan Stewart, 15,136.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

[16] In 1840 Gerrit Smith received 2662; in 1842 Alvan Stewart polled 7263.—*Ibid.*, p. 166.

[17] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 1, p. 572.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RISE OF JOHN YOUNG

1845-1846

ALTHOUGH the Democrats were again successful in electing a governor and President, their victory had not healed the disastrous schism that divided the party. The rank and file throughout the State had not yet recognised the division into Radicals and Conservatives; but the members of the new Legislature foresaw, in the rivalries of leaders, the approach of a marked crisis, the outcome of which they awaited with an overshadowing sense of fear.

The strife of programmes began in the selection of a speaker. Horatio Seymour was the logical candidate. Of the Democratic members of the last Assembly, he was the only one returned. He had earned the preferment by able service, and a disposition obtained generally among members to give him the right of way; but the state officials had not forgotten and could not forget that Seymour, whose supple and trenchant blade had opened a way through the ranks of the Radicals for the passage of the last canal appropriation, had further sinned by marshalling Governor Bouck's forces at the Syracuse convention on September 4, 1844; and to teach him discretion and less independence, they promptly warned him of their opposition by supporting William C. Crain of Herkimer, a fierce Radical of the Hoffman school and a man of some ability. Though the ultimate decision favoured Seymour, Azariah C. Flagg, the state comptroller, resolutely exhausted every device of strategy and tactics to avert it. He summoned the canal board, who, in turn, summoned to Albany their up-state employees, mindful of the latter's influence with the unsophisticated legislators already

haunted by the fear of party disruption. To limit the issue, Governor Wright was quoted as favourable to Crain, and, although it subsequently became known that he had expressed no opinion save one of entire indifference, this added to the zeal of the up-state Radicals, who now showed compliance with every hint of their masters.

In the midst of all Horatio Seymour remained undaunted. No one had better poise, or firmer patience, or possessed more adroit methods. The personal attractions of the man, his dignity of manner, his finished culture, and his ability to speak often in debate with acceptance, had before attracted men to him; now he was to reveal the new and greater power of leadership. Seymour's real strength as a factor in state affairs seems to date from this contest. It is doubtful if he would have undertaken it had he suspected the fierceness of the opposition. He was not ambitious to be speaker. So far as it affected him personally, he had every motive to induce him to remain on the floor, where his eloquence and debating power had won him such a place. But, once having announced his candidacy he pushed on with energy, sometimes masking his movements, sometimes mining and countermining; yet always conscious of the closeness of the race and of the necessity of keeping his activity well spiced with good nature. Back of him stood Edwin Croswell. The astute editor of the *Argus* recognised in Horatio Seymour, so brilliant in battle, so strong in council, the future hope of the Democratic party. It is likely, too, that Croswell already foresaw that Van Buren's opposition to the annexation of Texas, and the growing Free-soil sentiment, must inevitably occasion new party alignments; and the veteran journalist, who had now been a party leader for nearly a quarter of a century, understood the necessity of having available and successful men ready for emergencies. Under his management, therefore, and to offset the influence of the canal board's employees, Conservative postmasters and Conservative sheriffs came to Albany, challenging their Radical canal opponents to a measurement of strength. When,

finally, the caucus acted, the result showed how closely divided were the factions. Of seventy Democrats in the Assembly, sixty-five were present, and of these thirty-five voted for Seymour.

The irritation and excitement of this contest were in a measure allayed by an agreement to renominate Azariah C. Flagg for comptroller of state. His ability and his service warranted it. He had performed the multiplying duties of the office with fidelity; and, although chief of the active Radicals, the recollection of his stalwart aid in the great financial panic of 1837, and in the preparation and advocacy of the act of 1842, gave him a support that no other candidate could command. It was also in the minds of two or three members holding the balance of power between the factions, to add to the harmony by securing an even division of the other four state offices. In carrying out their project, however, the gifted Croswell took good care that Samuel Young, whose zeal and ability especially endeared him to the Radicals, should be beaten for secretary of state by one vote, and that Thomas Farrington, another favourite Radical, should fail of re-election as treasurer of state. Since Young and Farrington were the only state officers, besides Flagg, seeking re-election, it looked as if their part in the speakership struggle had marked them for defeat, a suspicion strengthened by the fact that two Radicals, who took no part in that contest, were elected attorney-general and surveyor-general.

Reproachful ironies and bitter animosity, boding ill for future harmony, now followed the factions into a furious and protracted caucus for the selection of United States senators in place of Silas Wright and Nathaniel P. Tallmadge, the latter having resigned to accept the governorship of Wisconsin.[1] The Conservatives supported Daniel S. Dickinson

[1] "On that occasion the feud between the two sections of the party was disclosed in all its intensity. The conflict, which was sharp and ended in the election of Daniel S. Dickinson for the six-years term, in spite of the strong opposition of the Radical members

and Henry A. Foster; the Radicals John A. Dix and Michael Hoffman. There was more, however, at stake than the selection of two senators; for the President would probably choose a member of his Cabinet from the stronger faction; and to have time to recruit their strength, the programme of the Radicals included an adjournment of the caucus after nominating candidates for the unexpired terms of Wright and Tallmadge. This would possibly give them control of the full six years' term to begin on the 4th of the following March. A majority of the caucus, however, now completely under the influence of Edwin Croswell and Horatio Seymour, concluded to do one thing at a time, and on the first ballot Dix was nominated for Wright's place, giving him a term of four years. The second ballot named Dickinson for the remaining month of Tallmadge's term. Then came the climax —the motion to adjourn. Instantly the air was thick with suggestions. Coaxing and bullying held the boards. All sorts of proposals came and vanished with the breath that floated them; and, though the hour approached midnight, a Conservative majority insisted upon finishing the business. The election of Dix for a term of four years, they said, had given the Radicals fair representation. Still, the latter clamoured for an adjournment. But the Conservatives, inexorable, demanded a third ballot, and it gave Dickinson fifty-four out of ninety-three members present. When the usual motion to make the nomination unanimous was bitterly opposed, Horatio Seymour took the floor, and with the moving charm and power of his voice, with temper unbroken, he made a fervid appeal for harmony. But bitterness ruled the midnight hour; unanimity still lacked thirty-nine votes. As the Radicals passed out into the frosty air, breaking the stillness with

of the caucus, was a triumph for the Conservatives, and a defeat for the friends of Governor Wright. The closing years of the great statesman's life were overcast by shadows; adverse influences were evidently in the ascendant, not only at Washington, but close about him and at home."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, p. 194.

their expletives, the voice of the tempter suggested a union with the Whigs for the election of Samuel Young. There was abundant precedent to support the plan. Bailey had bolted Woodworth's nomination; German had defeated Thompson; and, in 1820, Rufus King had triumphed over Samuel Young. But these were the tactics of DeWitt Clinton. In 1845, the men who aspired to office, the men with a past and the men who looked for a future, had no words of approval for such methods; and before the Whigs heard of the scheme, Samuel Young had stamped it to death.

To add to the chagrin of the Radicals, President Polk now invited William L. Marcy, a Conservative of great prestige, to become secretary of war. The Radicals did not know, and perhaps could not know the exact condition of things at the national capital; certainly they did not know how many elements of that condition told against them. President Polk, apparently with a desire of treating his New York friends fairly, asked Van Buren to recommend a New Yorker for his Cabinet; and, with the approval of Silas Wright, the former President urged Benjamin F. Butler for secretary of state, or Azariah C. Flagg for secretary of the treasury. Either of these men would have filled the place designated with great ability. Polk was largely indebted to Van Buren and his friends; Butler had given him the vote of New York, and Wright, by consenting to stand for governor at the urgent solicitation of Van Buren, had carried the State and thus made Democratic success possible. But Polk, more interested in future success than in the payment of past indebtedness, had an eye out for 1848. He wanted a man devoted solely to his interests and to the annexation of Texas; and, although Butler was a personal friend and an ornament to the American bar, he hesitated, despite the insistence of Van Buren and Wright, to make a secretary of state out of the most devoted of Van Buren's adherents, who, like the sage of Lindenwald himself, bitterly opposed annexation.

In this emergency, the tactics of Edwin Croswell came to Polk's relief. The former knew that Silas Wright could not,

if he would, accept a place in the Cabinet, since he had repeatedly declared during the campaign that, if elected, he would not abandon the governorship to enter the Cabinet, as Van Buren did in 1829. Croswell knew, also, that Butler, having left the Cabinet of two Presidents to re-enter his profession, would not give it up for a secondary place among Polk's advisers. At the editor's suggestion, therefore, the President tendered Silas Wright the head of the treasury, and, upon his declination, an offer of the secretaryship of war came to Butler. The latter said he would have taken, although with reluctance, either the state or treasury department; but the war portfolio carried him too far from the line of his profession. Thus the veteran editor's scheme, having worked itself out as anticipated, left the President at liberty, without further consultation with Van Buren, to give William L. Marcy[2] what Butler had refused. To the Radicals the result was as startling as it was unwelcome. It left the Conservatives in authority. Through Marcy they would command the federal patronage, and through their majority in the Legislature they could block the wheels of their opponents. It was at this time that the Conservatives, "hankering," it was said, after the offices to be given by an Administration committed to the annexation of Texas, were first called "Hunkers."

John Young, a Whig member of the Assembly, no sooner scented the increasingly bitter feeling between Hunker and Radical than he prepared to take advantage of it. Young was a great surprise to the older leaders. He had accomplished nothing in the past to entitle him to distinction. In youth he accompanied his father, a Vermont innkeeper, to Livingston County, where he received a common school education and studied law, being admitted to the bar in 1829, at the age of twenty-seven. Two years later he served a single

[2] "On the great question that loomed threateningly on the horizon, Wright and Marcy took opposite sides. Wright moved calmly along with the advancing liberal sentiment of the period, and died a firm advocate of the policy of the Wilmot Proviso. On this test measure Marcy took no step forward."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 40.

term in the Assembly, and for ten years thereafter he had confined his attention almost exclusively to his profession, becoming a strong jury lawyer. In the meantime, he changed his politics from a firm supporter of Andrew Jackson to a local anti-masonic leader, and finally to a follower of Henry Clay. Then the Whigs sent him to Congress, and, in the fall of 1843, elected him to the celebrated Assembly through which Horatio Seymour forced the canal appropriation. But John Young seems to have made little more of a reputation in this historic struggle than he did as a colleague of Millard Fillmore in the Congress that passed the tariff act of 1842. He did not remain silent, but neither his words nor his acts conveyed any idea of the gifts which he was destined to disclose in the various movements of a drama that was now, day by day, through much confusion and bewilderment, approaching a climax. From a politician of local reputation, he leaped to the distinction of a state leader. If unnoticed before, he was now the observed of all observers. This transition, which came almost in a day, surprised the Democrats no less than it excited the Whigs; for Young lifted a minority into a majority, and from a hopeless defeat was destined to lead his party to glorious victory. "With talents of a high order," says Hammond, "with industry, with patient perseverance, and with a profound knowledge of men, he was one of the ablest party leaders and most skilful managers in a popular body that ever entered the Assembly chamber."[3] Hammond, writing while Young was governor, did not express the view of Thurlow Weed, who was unwilling to accept tact and cunning for great intellectual power. But there is no doubt that Young suddenly showed uncommon parliamentary ability, not only as a debater, owing to his good voice and earnest, persuasive manner, but as a skilful strategist, who strengthened coolness, courtesy, and caution with a readiness to take advantage of the supreme moment to carry things his way. Within a month, he became an acknowledged master of parliamentary law, easily bring-

[3] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 537.

ing order out of confusion by a few simple, clear, compact sentences. If his learning did not rank him among the Sewards and the Seymours, he had no occasion to fear an antagonist in the field on which he was now to win his leadership.

The subject under consideration was the calling of a constitutional convention. The preceding Legislature, hoping to avoid a convention, had proposed several amendments which the people approved in the election of 1844; but the failure of the present Legislature to ratify them by a two-thirds majority, made a convention inevitable, and the question now turned upon the manner of its calling and the approval of its work. The Hunkers, with the support of the Governor, desired first to submit the matter to the people; and, if carried by a majority vote, taking as a test the number of votes polled at the last election, the amendments were to be acted upon separately. This was the plan of Governor Clinton in 1821. On the other hand, the Whigs, the Anti-Renters, and the Native Americans insisted that the Legislature call a convention, and that its work be submitted, as a whole, to the people, as in 1821. This the Hunkers resisted to the bitter end. An obstacle suddenly appeared, also, in the conduct of William C. Crain, who thought an early and unlimited convention necessary. Michael Hoffman held the same view, believing it the only method of getting the act of 1842 incorporated into the organic law of the State. Upon the latter's advice, therefore, Crain introduced a bill in the Assembly similar to the convention act of 1821. It was charged, at the time, that Crain's action was due to resentment because of his defeat for speaker, and that the Governor, in filling the vacancy occasioned by the transfer of Samuel Nelson to the Supreme Court of the United States, had added to his indignation by overlooking the claims of Michael Hoffman. It is not improbable that Crain, irritated by his defeat, did resent the action of the Governor, although it was well known that Hoffman had not sought a place on the Supreme bench. But, in preferring an unlimited constitutional convention, Crain and Hoffman expressed the belief of the

most eminent lawyers of the Commonwealth, that the time had come for radical changes in the Constitution, and that these could not be obtained unless the work of a convention was submitted in its entirety to the people and approved by a majority vote.

Crain's bill was quickly pigeon-holed by the select committee to which it was referred, and John Young's work began when he determined to have it reported. There had been little difficulty in marshalling a third of the Assembly to defeat the constitutional amendments proposed by the preceding Legislature, since Whigs, Anti-Renters, and Native Americans numbered fifty-four of the one hundred and twenty-eight members; but, to overcome a majority of seventeen, required Young's patient attendance, day after day, watchful for an opportuntiy to make a motion whenever the Hunkers, ignorant of his design, were reduced by temporary absences to an equality with the minority. Finally, the sought-for moment came, and, with Crain's help, Young carried a motion instructing the committee to report the Crain bill without amendment, and making it the special order for each day until disposed of. It was a staggering blow. The air was thick with suggestions, contrivances, expedients, and embryonic proposals. The Governor, finding Crain inexorable, sent for Michael Hoffman; but the ablest Radical in the State refused to intervene, knowing that if the programme proposed by Wright was sustained, the Whigs would withdraw their support and leave the Hunkers in control.

When the debate opened, interest centred in the course taken by the Radicals, who accepted the principle of the bill, but who demurred upon details and dreaded to divide their party. To this controlling group, therefore, were arguments addressed and appeals made. Hammond pronounced it "one of the best, if not the best, specimens of parliamentary discussion ever exhibited in the capital of the State."[4] Other writers have recorded similar opinions. It was certainly a memorable debate, but it was made so by the serious political

[4] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 544.

situation, rather than by the importance of the subject. Horatio Seymour led his party, and, though other Hunkers participated with credit, upon the Speaker fell the brunt of the fight. He dispensed with declamation, he avoided bitter words, he refused to crack the party whip; but with a deep, onflowing volume of argument and exhortation, his animated expressions, modulated and well balanced, stirred the emotions and commanded the closest attention. Seymour had an instinct "for the hinge or turning point of a debate." He had, also, a never failing sense of the propriety, dignity, and moderation with which subjects should be handled, or "the great endearment of prudent and temperate speech" as Jeremy Taylor calls it; and, although he could face the fiercest opposition with the keenest blade, his utterances rarely left a sting or subjected him to criticism. This gift was one secret of his great popularity, and daily rumours predicted harmony before a vote could be reached. As the stormy scenes which marked the progress of the bill continued, however, the less gifted Hunkers did not hesitate to declare the party dissolved unless the erring Radicals fell into line.

John Young, who knew the giant burden he had taken up, showed himself acute, frank, patient, closely attentive, and possessed of remarkable powers of speech. Every word surprised his followers; every stroke strengthened his position. He did not speak often, but he always answered Seymour, presenting a fine and sustained example of debate, keeping within strict rules of combat, and preserving a rational and argumentative tone, yet emphasising the differences between Hunker and Radical. Young could not be called brilliant, nor did he have the capacity or finish of Seymour as an orator; but he formed his own opinions, usually with great sagacity, and acted with vigour and skill amid the exasperation produced by the Radical secession. Seward wrote that "he has much practical good sense, and much caution." This was evidenced by the fact that, although only four Radicals voted to report Crain's bill, others gradually went over, until

finally, on its passage, only Hunkers voted in the negative. It was a great triumph for Young. He had beaten a group of clever managers; he had weakened the Democratic party by widening the breach between its factions; and he had turned the bill recommending a convention into a Whig measure.

The bad news discouraged the senators who dreamed of an abiding union between the two factions; and, although one or two Radicals in the upper chamber favoured the submission of the amendments separately to the people, the friends of the measure obtained two majority against all attempts to modify it, and four majority on its passage. The Governor's approval completed Young's triumph. He had not only retained his place as an able minority leader against the relentless, tireless assaults of a Seymour, a Croswell, and a Wright; but, in the presence of such odds, he had gained the distinction of turning a minority into a reliable majority in both houses, placing him at once upon a higher pedestal than is often reached by men of far greater genius and eloquence.

The determination of the Hunkers to pass a measure appropriating $197,000 for canal improvement made the situation still more critical. Although the bill devoted the money to completing such unfinished portions of the Genesee Valley and Black River canals as the commissioners approved, it was clearly in violation of the spirit of the act of 1842 upon which Hunker and Radical had agreed to bury their differences, and the latter resented its introduction as an inexcusable affront; but John Young now led his Whig followers to the camp of the Hunkers, and, in a few days, the measure lay upon the Governor's table for his approval or veto.

Thus far, Governor Wright had been a disappointment to his party. Complaints from Radicals were heard before his inauguration. They resented his acceptance of a Hunker's hospitality, asserting that he should have made his home at a public house where Hunker and Radical alike could freely counsel with him; they complained of his resignation as United States senator, insisting that he ought to have held

the office until his inauguration as governor and thus prevented Bouck appointing a Hunker as his successor; they denounced his indifference in the speakership contest; and they murmured at his opposition to a constitutional convention. There was cause for some of these lamentations. It was plain that the Governor was neither a leader nor a conciliator. A little tact would have held the Radicals in line against a constitutional convention and kept inviolate the act of 1842, but he either did not possess or disclaimed the arts and diplomacies of a political manager. He could grapple with principles in the United States Senate and follow them to their logical end, but he could not see into the realities of things as clearly as Seymour, or estimate, with the same accuracy, the relative strength of conflicting tendencies in the political world. Writers of that day express amazement at the course of Silas Wright in vetoing the canal appropriation, some of them regarding him as a sort of political puzzle, others attributing his action to the advice of false friends; but his adherence to principle more easily explains it. Seymour knew that the "up-state" voters, who would probably hold the balance of power in the next election, wanted the canal finished and would resent its defeat. Wright, on the other hand, believed in a suspension of public works until the debt of the State was brought within the safe control of its revenues, and in the things he stood for, he was as unyielding as flint.

When the Legislature adjourned Hunkers and Radicals were too wide apart even to unite in the usual address to constituents; and in the fall campaign of 1845, the party fell back upon the old issues of the year before. To the astonishment of the Hunkers, however, the legislative session opened in January, 1846, with two Radicals to one Conservative. It looked to the uninitiated as if the policy of canal improvement had fallen into disfavour; but Croswell, and other Hunkers in the inner political circle, understood that a change, long foreseen by them, was rapidly approaching. The people of New York felt profound interest in the conflict

between slavery and freedom, and the fearless stand of Preston King of St. Lawrence in supporting the Wilmot Proviso, excluding "slavery and involuntary servitude" from the territory obtained from Mexico, had added fuel to the flame. King was a Radical from principle and from prejudice. For four successive years he had been in the Assembly, hostile to canals and opposed to all improvements. In his bitterness he denounced the Whig party as the old Federalist party under another name. He was now, at the age of forty, serving his second term in Congress. But, obstinate and uncompromising as was his Democracy, the aggressive spirit and encroaching designs of slavery had so deeply disturbed him that he refused to go with his party in its avowed purpose of extending slavery into free or newly acquired territory.

To the Hunkers, this new departure seemed to offer an opportunity of weakening the Radicals by forcing them into opposition to the Polk administration; and a resolution, approving the course of the New York congressmen who had supported the annexation of Texas, appeared in the Senate soon after its organisation. Very naturally, politicians were afraid of it; and the debate, which quickly degenerated into bitter personalities, indicated that the Free-soil sentiment, soon to inspire the new Republican party, had not only taken root among the Radicals, but that rivalries between the two factions rested on differences of principle far deeper than canal improvement. "If you study the papers at all," wrote William H. Seward, "you will see that the Barnburners of this State have carried the war into Africa, and the extraordinary spectacle is exhibited of Democrats making up an issue of slavery at Washington. The consequences of this movement cannot be fully apprehended. It brings on the great question sooner and more directly than we have even hoped. All questions of revenue, currency, and economy sink before it. The hour for the discussion of emancipation is nearer at hand, by many years, than has been supposed."[5]

[5] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 33.

CHAPTER IX

THE FOURTH CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

1846

The constitutional convention, called by the Legislature of 1845, received popular sanction at the fall elections; and, in April, 1846, one hundred and twenty-eight delegates were chosen. The convention assembled on the first day of June, and terminated its labours on the ninth day of October. It was an able body of men. It did not contain, perhaps, so many distinguished citizens as its predecessor in 1821, but, like the convention of a quarter of a century before, it included many men who had acquired reputations for great ability at the bar and in public affairs during the two decades immediately preceding it. Among the more prominent were Michael Hoffman of Herkimer, famous for his influence in the cause of canal economy; James Tallmadge of Dutchess, whose inspiring eloquence had captivated conventions and legislatures for thirty years; William C. Bouck of Schoharie, the unconquered Hunker who had faced defeat as gracefully as he had accepted gubernatorial honours; Samuel Nelson, recently appointed to the United States Supreme Court after an experience of twenty-two years upon the circuit and supreme bench of the State; Charles S. Kirkland and Ezekiel Bacon of Oneida, the powerful leaders of a bar famous in that day for its famous lawyers; Churchill C. Cambreling of New York, a member of Congress for eighteen consecutive years, and, more recently, minister to Russia; George W. Patterson of Livingston, a constant, untiring and enthusiastic Whig champion, twice elected speaker of the Assembly and soon to become lieutenant-governor.

Of the younger delegates, three were just at the threshold

of their brilliant and distinguished careers. John K. Porter of Saratoga—then only twenty-seven years old, afterward to become a member of the Court of Appeals and the associate of William M. Evarts as counsel for Henry Ward Beecher in the Tilton suit—discussed the judiciary in speeches singularly adapted to reach the understanding of the delegates; Samuel J. Tilden, who had served respectably but without distinction in the Assembly of 1845 and 1846, evidenced his inflexible courage and high intellectual qualities; and Charles O'Conor, already known to the public, gave signal proof of the prodigious extent of those powers and acquirements which finally entitled him to rank with the greatest lawyers of any nation or any time.

Of the more distinguished members of the convention of 1821, James Tallmadge alone sat in the convention of 1846. Daniel D. Tompkins, Rufus King, William W. Van Ness, Jonas Platt, and Abraham Van Vechten were dead; James Kent, now in his eighty-third year, was delivering law lectures in New York City; Ambrose Spencer, having served as chairman of the Whig national convention at Baltimore, in 1844, had returned, at the age of eighty-one, to the quiet of his agricultural pursuits in the vicinity of Lyons; Martin Van Buren, still rebellious against his party, was watching from his retreat at Lindenwald the strife over the Wilmot Proviso, embodying the opposition to the extension of slavery into new territories; Erastus Root, at the age of seventy-four, was dying in New York City; and Samuel Young, famous by his knightly service in the cause of the Radicals, had just finished in the Assembly, with the acerbity of temper that characterised his greatest oratorical efforts during nearly half a century of public life, an eloquent indictment of the Hunkers, whom he charged with being the friends of monopoly, the advocates of profuse and unnecessary expenditures of the public funds, and the cause of much corrupt legislation.

But of all men in the State the absence of William H. Seward was the most noticeable. For four years, as governor,

he had stood for internal improvements, for the reorganisation of the judiciary along lines of progress, for diminishing official patronage, for modifying, and ultimately doing away with, feudal tenures, and for free schools and universal suffrage. His experience and ability would have been most helpful in the formation of the new constitution; but he would not become a delegate except from Auburn, and a majority of the people of his own assembly district did not want him. "The world are all mad with me here," he wrote Weed, "because I defended Wyatt too faithfully. God help them to a better morality. The prejudices against me grows by reason of the Van Nest murder!"[1] Political friends offered him a nomination and election from Chautauqua, but he declined, urging as a further reason that the Whigs would be in the minority, and his presence might stimulate fresh discords among them.

Horace Greeley had expected a nomination from Chautauqua. He had relations who promised him support, and with their failure to elect him began that yearning for office which was destined to doom him to many bitter disappointments. Until now, he had kept his desires to himself. He wanted to be postmaster of New York in 1841; and, when Seward failed to anticipate his ambition, he recalled the scriptural injunction, "Ask, and it shall be given you." So, he conferred with Weed about the constitutional convention. Washington County was suggested, then Delaware, and later Albany; but, the nominees having been selected, the project was abandoned, and Horace Greeley waited until the convention of 1867. Weed expressed the belief that if Greeley's wishes had been known two weeks earlier, his ambition might have been gratified, although on only two occasions had non-resident delegates ever been selected.

Popular sovereignty attained its highest phase under the Constitution of 1846; and the convention must always be notable as the great dividing line between a government by the people, and a government delegated by the people to cer-

[1] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 791.

tain officials—executive, legislative, and judicial—who were invested with general and more or less permanent powers. Under the Constitution of 1821, the power of appointment was placed in the governor, the Senate, and the Assembly. State officers were elected by the Legislature, judges nominated by the governor and confirmed by the Senate, district attorneys appointed by county courts, justices of the peace chosen by boards of supervisors, and mayors of cities selected by the common council. Later amendments made justices of the peace and mayors of cities elective; but, with these exceptions, from 1821 to 1846 the Constitution underwent no organic changes. Under the Constitution of 1846, however, all officers became elective; and, to bring them still nearer the people, an elective judiciary was decentralised, terms of senators were reduced from four to two years, and the selection of legislators was confined to single districts. It was also provided that amendments to the Constitution might be submitted to the people at any time upon the approval of a bare legislative majority. Even the office of governor, which had been jealously reserved to native citizens, was thrown open to all comers, whether born in the United States or elsewhere.

As if to accentuate the great change which public sentiment had undergone in the preceding twenty years these provisions were generally concurred in by large majorities and without political bias. The proposition that a governor need not be either a freeholder or a native citizen was sustained by a vote of sixty-one to forty-nine; the proposal to overcome the governor's veto by a majority instead of a two-thirds vote was carried by sixty-one to thirty-six; the term of senators was reduced from four to two years by a vote of eighty to twenty-three; and their selection confined to single districts by a majority of seventy-nine to thirty-one. An equally large majority favoured the provision that no member of the Legislature should receive from the governor or Legislature any civil appointment within the State, or to the United States Senate. Charles O'Conor antagonised the in-

hibition of an election to the United States Senate with much learning and eloquence. He thought the power of the State to qualify or restrict the choice of senators was inconsistent with the Federal Constitution; but the great majority of the convention held otherwise. Indeed, so popular did this section become that, in 1874, members of the Legislature were prohibited from taking office under a city government.

The period when property measured a man's capacity and influence also seems to have passed away with the adoption of the Constitution of 1846. For the first time in the State's history, the great landholders lost control, and provisions as to the land law became clear and wholesome. Feudal tenures were abolished, lands declared allodial, fines and quarter sales made void, and leases of agricultural lands for longer than twelve years pronounced illegal. Although vested rights could not be affected, the policy of the new constitutional conditions, aided by the accessibility of better and cheaper lands along lines of improved transportation, compelled landlords in the older parts of the State to seek compromises and to offer greater inducements. The only persons required to own property in order to enjoy suffrage and the right to hold office were negroes, who continued to rest under the ban until the adoption of the fifteenth amendment to the Federal Constitution. The people of New York felt profound interest in the great conflict between slavery and freedom, but, for more than a quarter of a century after the Wilmot Proviso became the shibboleth of the Barnburners, a majority of voters denied the coloured man equality of suffrage. Among the thirty-two delegates in the convention of 1846 who refused to allow the people to pass upon the question of equality of suffrage, appear the names of Charles O'Conor and Samuel J. Tilden.

The great purpose of the convention was the reform of the laws relating to debt and to the creation of a new judicial establishment. Michael Hoffman headed the committee charged with the solution of financial problems. He saw the importance of devoting the resources of the State to the re-

duction of its debt. It was important to the character of the people, he thought, that they should be restless and impatient under the obligation of debt; and the strong ground taken by him against an enlargement of the Erie and its lateral canals had resulted in the passage of the famous act of 1842, the substance of which he now desired incorporated into the Constitution. He would neither tolerate compromises with debtors of the State, nor allow its credit to be loaned. He favoured sinking funds, he advocated direct taxation, he insisted upon the strictest observance of appropriation laws, and he opposed the sale of the canals. In his speeches he probably exaggerated the canal debt, just as he minimised the canal income and brushed aside salt and auction duties as of little importance; yet everybody recognised him as the schoolmaster of the convention on financial subjects. His blackboard shone in the sunlight. He was courteous, but without much deference. There was neither yielding nor timidity. If his flint struck a spark by collision with another, it made little difference to him. Yet years afterward, Thurlow Weed, who backed Seward in his appeal for more extensive internal improvements, admitted that to Hoffman's enlightened statesmanship, New York was indebted for the financial article in the Constitution of 1846, which had preserved the public credit and the public faith through every financial crisis.[2]

Hoffman placed the state debt, with interest which must be paid up to the time of its extinguishment, at thirty-eight million dollars. Out of the canal revenues he wanted $1,500,000 paid yearly upon the canal debt; $672,000 set apart for the use of the State; and the balance applied to the improvement of the Erie canal, whenever the surplus amounted to $2,500,000. Further to conserve the interests of the Commonwealth, he insisted that its credit should not be loaned; that its borrowed money should not exceed one million dollars, except to repel invasion or suppress insurrection; and that no debt should be created without laying

[2] *Autobiography of Thurlow Weed*, p. 34.

a direct annual tax sufficient to pay principal and interest in eighteen years. The result showed that, in spite of vigorous opposition, he got all he demanded. Some of the amounts were reduced; others slightly diverted; and the remaining surplus of the canal revenues, instead of accumulating until it aggregated $2,500,000, was applied each year to the enlargement of the Erie canal and the completion of the Genesee Valley and Black River canals; but his plan was practically adopted and time has amply justified the wisdom of his limitations. In concluding his last speech, the distinguished Radical declared "that this legislation would not only preserve the credit of New York by keeping its debts paid, but it would cause every State in the Union, as soon as such States were able to do so, to sponge out its debts by payment and thus remove from representative government the reproaches cast upon us on the other side of the water."[3]

But Hoffman, while exciting the admiration of all men for his persistence, dexterity, and ability, did not lead the most important contest. In 1846, the popular desire for radical changes in the judiciary was not less peremptory than the expression in 1821. Up to this time, the courts of the State, in part, antedated the War of Independence. Now, in place of the ancient appointive system, the people demanded an elective judiciary which should be responsible to them and bring the courts to them. To make these changes, the president of the convention appointed a committee of thirteen, headed by Charles H. Ruggles of Dutchess, which embraced the lawyers of most eminence among the delegates. After the chairman came Charles O'Conor of New York, Charles P. Kirkland of Utica, Ambrose L. Jordan of Columbia, Arphaxed Loomis of Herkimer, Alvah Worden of Saratoga, George W. Patterson of Livingston, and several others of lesser note. At the end of the committee appeared a merchant and a farmer, possibly for the reason that condiments make a dish more savoury. Ruggles was a simple-

[3] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 655.

hearted and wise man. He had been on the Supreme bench for fifteen years, becoming one of the distinguished jurists of the State. In the fierce conflicts between Clintonians and Bucktails he acted with the former, and then, in 1828, followed DeWitt Clinton to the support of Andrew Jackson. But Ruggles never offended anybody. His wise and moderate counsel had drawn the fire from many a wild and dangerous scheme, but it left no scars. Prudence and modesty had characterised his life, and his selection as chairman of the judiciary committee disarmed envy and jealousy. He was understood to favour an elective judiciary and moderation in all doubtful reforms. Arphaxed Loomis possessed unusual abilities as a public speaker, and, during a brief career in the Assembly, had become known as an advocate of legal reform. He was afterward, in April, 1847, appointed a commissioner on practice and pleadings for the purpose of providing a uniform course of proceedings in all cases; and, to him, perhaps, more than to any one else, is due the credit of establishing one form of action for the protection of private rights and the redress of private wrongs. Worden had been a merchant, who, losing his entire possessions by failure, began the study of law at the age of thirty-four and quickly took a prominent place among the lawyers of the State. Ambrose L. Jordan, although somewhat younger than Benjamin F. Butler, Thomas Oakley, Henry R. Storrs, and other former leaders of the bar, was their successful opponent, and had gained the distinction of winning the first breach of promise suit in which a woman figured as defendant. Patterson had rare and exquisite gifts which made him many friends and kept him for half a century prominent in political affairs. Though of undoubted intellectual power, clear-sighted, and positive, he rarely answered other men's arguments, and never with warmth or heat. But he had, however, read and mastered the law, and his voice was helpful in conferring upon the people a system which broke the yoke of the former colonial subordination.

The majority report of the judiciary committee provided for a new court of last resort, to be called the Court of Appeals, which was to consist of eight members, four of whom were to be elected from the State at large for a term of eight years, and four to be chosen from the justices of the Supreme Court. A new Supreme Court of thirty-two members, having general and original jurisdiction in law and equity, was established in place of the old Supreme Court and Court of Chancery, the State being divided into eight districts, in each of which four judges were to be elected. In addition to these great courts, inferior local tribunals of civil and criminal jurisdiction were provided for cities. The report thus favoured three radical changes. Judges became elective, courts of law and equity were united, and county courts were abolished. The inclusion of senators in the old Court of Errors—which existed from the foundation of the State—had made the elective system somewhat familiar to the people, to whom it had proved more satisfactory than the method of appointment; but the union of courts of law and equity was an untried experiment in New York. It had the sanction of other States, and, in part, of the judicial system of the United States, where procedure at law and in equity had become assimilated, if not entirely blended, thus abolishing the inconvenience of so many tribunals and affording greater facility for the trial of equity causes involving questions of fact.

But delegates were slow to profit by the experience of other Commonwealths. From the moment the report was submitted attacks upon it became bitter and continuous. Charles O'Conor opposed the elective system, the union of the two courts, and the abolition of the county court. Charles P. Kirkland proposed that only three members of the Court of Appeals be elected, the others to be appointed by the governor, with the consent of the Senate. Alvah Worden wanted two Courts of Appeals, one of law and one of chancery, neither of which should be elective. Simmons desired a different organisation of the Supreme

Court, and Bascom objected to the insufficient number of sessions of the court provided for the whole State. Others of the minority submitted reports and opinions, until the subject seemed hopelessly befogged and the work of the majority a failure. O'Conor was especially impatient and restless in his opposition. In skill and ability no one could vie with him in making the old ways seem better. He was now forty-two years old. He had a powerful and vigorous frame, and a powerful and vigorous understanding. It was the wonder of his colleagues how, in addition to the faithful work performed in committee, he could get time for the research that was needed to equip him for the great speeches with which he adorned the debates. He never held office, save, during a portion of President Pierce's administration, that of United States attorney for the southern district of New York; but his rapid, almost instinctive judgment, his tact, his ability to crush sophistries with a single sentence, and his vigorous rhetoric must have greatly distinguished his administration of any office which he might have occupied. Yet the conservatism which finally separated him from the cordial supporters of the government during the Civil War usually kept him in the minority. His spirit was not the spirit that governed; and, in spite of his brilliant and determined opposition, the convention of 1846 accepted the elective system, approved the union of equity and law courts, prohibited the election of a member of the Legislature to the United States Senate, and submitted to the decision of the people the right of coloured men to equal suffrage. Only in the retention of the county court were O'Conor's views sustained; and this came largely through the influence of Arphaxed Loomis, the material part of whose amendment was ultimately adopted. When, finally, the Constitution in its entirety was submitted to the convention for its approval, O'Conor was one of six to vote against it.

The Constitution of 1846 was the people's Constitution. It reserved to them the right to act more frequently upon a large class of questions, introducing the referendum which

characterises popular government, and making it a more perfect expression of the popular will. That the people appreciated the greater power reserved to them was shown on the third of November, by a vote of 221,528 to 92,436. With few modifications, the Constitution of 1846 still remains in force, —ample proof that wisdom, unalloyed with partisan politics or blind conservatism, guided the convention which framed it.

CHAPTER X

DEFEAT AND DEATH OF SILAS WRIGHT

1846-1847

The Democratic campaign for governor in 1846 opened with extraordinary interest. Before the Legislature adjourned, on May 13, the Hunkers refused to attend a party caucus for the preparation of the usual address. Subsequently, however, they issued one of their own, charging the Radicals with hostility to the Polk administration and with selfishness, born of a desire to control every office within the gift of the canal board. The address did not, in terms, name Silas Wright, but the Governor was not blind to its attacks. "They are not very different from what I expected when I consented to take this office," he wrote a friend in Canton. "I do not yet think it positively certain that we shall lose the convention, but that its action and the election are to produce a perfect separation of a portion of our party from the main body I cannot any longer entertain a single doubt. You must not permit appearances to deceive you. Although I am not denounced here by name with others, the disposition to do that, if policy would permit, is not even disguised, and every man known to be strongly my friend and firmly in my confidence is more bitterly denounced than any other."[1]

It is doubtful if Silas Wright himself fully comprehended the real reason for such bitterness. He was a natural gentleman, kindly and true. He might sometimes err in judgment; but he was essentially a statesman of large and comprehensive vision, incapable of any meanness or conscious wrongdoing. The masses of the party regarded him as the

[1] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 756. *Appendix.*

representative of the opportunity which a great State, in a republic, holds out to the children of its humblest and poorest citizens. He was as free from guile as a little child. To him principle and party stood before all other things; and he could not be untrue to one any more than to the other. But the leaders of the Hunker wing did not take kindly to him. They could not forget that the Radical state officers, with whom he coincided in principle, in conjuring with his name in 1844 had defeated the renomination of Governor Bouck; and, though they might admit that his nomination practically elected Polk, by extracting the party from the mire of Texas annexation, they preferred, deep in their hearts, a Whig governor to his continuance in office, since his influence with the people for high ends was not in accord with their purposes. For more than a decade these men, as Samuel Young charged in his closing speech in the Assembly of that year, had been after the flesh-pots. They favoured the banking monopoly, preferring special charters that could be sold to free franchises under a general law; they influenced the creation of state stocks in which they profited; they owned lands which would appreciate by the construction of canals and railroads. To all these selfish interests, the Governor's restrictive policy was opposed; and while they did not dare denounce him by name, as the Governor suggested in his letter, their tactics increased the hostility that was eventually to destroy him.

It must be confessed, however, that the representation of Hunkers at the Democratic state convention, held at Syracuse on October 1, did not indicate much popular strength. The Radicals outnumbered them two to one. On the first ballot Silas Wright received one hundred and twelve votes out of one hundred and twenty-five, and, upon motion of Horatio Seymour, the nomination became unanimous. For lieutenant-governor, Addison Gardiner was renominated by acclamation. The convention then closed its labours with the adoption of a platform approving the re-enactment of the independent treasury law, the passage of the Walker tariff act,

and the work of the constitutional convention, with an expression of hope that the Mexican War, which had commenced on the 12th of the preceding May, might be speedily and honourably terminated. The address concluded with a just eulogy of Silas Wright. At the moment, the contest seemed at an end; but the sequel showed it was only a surface settlement.

If Democrats were involved in a quarrel, the Whigs were scarcely a happy family. It is not easy to pierce the fog which shrouds the division of the party; but it is clear that when Seward became governor and Weed dictator, trouble began in respect to men and to measures. Though less marked, possibly, than the differences between Democratic factions, the discord seemed to increase with the hopelessness of Whig ascendancy. Undoubtedly it began with Seward's recommendation of separate schools for the children of foreigners, and in his pronounced anti-slavery views; but it had also festered and expanded from disappointments, and from Weed's opposition to Henry Clay in 1836 and 1840. Even Horace Greeley, already consumed with a desire for public preferment, began to chafe under the domineering influence of Weed and the supposed neglect of Seward; while Millard Fillmore, and those acting with him, although retaining personal relations with Weed, were ready to break away at the first opportunity. As the Whigs had been in the minority for several years, the seriousness of these differences did not become public knowledge; but the newspapers divided the party into Radicals and Conservatives, the former being represented by the *Evening Journal* and the *Tribune*, the latter by the New York *Courier and Enquirer* and the Buffalo *Commercial-Advertiser*.

This division, naturally, led to some difference of opinion about a candidate for governor; and, when the Whig state convention met at Utica on September 23, an informal ballot developed fifty-five votes for Millard Fillmore, thirty-six for John Young, and twenty-one for Ira Harris, with eight or ten scattering. Fillmore had not sought the nomination.

Indeed, there is evidence that he protested against the presentation of his name; but his vote represented the conservative Whigs who did not take kindly either to Young or to Harris. Ira Harris, who was destined to bear a great part in a great history, had just entered his forty-fourth year. He was graduated from Union College with the highest honours, studied law with Ambrose Spencer, and slowly pushed himself into the front rank of practitioners at the Albany bar. In 1844, while absent in the West, the Anti-Renters nominated him, without his knowledge, for the Assembly, and, with the help of the Whigs, elected him. He had in no wise identified himself with active politics or with anti-rent associations; but the people honoured him for his integrity as well as for his fearless support of the principle of individual rights. In the Assembly he demonstrated the wisdom of their choice, evidencing distinguished ability and political tact. In 1845 the same people returned him to the Assembly. Then, in the following year, they sent him to the constitutional convention; and, some months later, to the State Senate. Beneath his plain courtesy was great firmness. He could not be otherwise than the constant friend of everything which made for the emancipation and elevation of the individual. His advocacy of an elective judiciary, the union of law and equity, and the simplification of pleadings and practice in the courts, showed that there were few stronger or clearer intellects in the constitutional convention. With good reason, therefore, the constituency that sent him there favoured him for governor.

But John Young shone as the popular man of the hour. Young was a middle-of-the-road Whig, whose candidacy grew out of his recent legislative record. He had forced the passage of the bill calling a constitutional convention, and had secured the canal appropriation which the Governor deemed it wise to veto. In the Assembly of 1845 and 1846, he became his party's choice for speaker; and, though not a man of refinement or scholarly attainments, or one, perhaps, whose wisdom and prudence could safely be relied upon

under the stress of great responsibilities, he was just then the chief figure of the State and of great influence with the people—especially with the Anti-Renters and their sympathisers, whose strife and turbulence in Columbia and Delaware counties had been summarily suppressed by Governor Wright. The older leaders of his party thought him somewhat of a demagogue; Thurlow Weed left the convention in disgust when he discovered that a pre-arranged transfer of the Harris votes would nominate him. But, with the avowed friendship of Ira Harris, Young was stronger at this time than Weed, and on the third ballot he received seventy-six votes to forty-five for Fillmore. To balance the ticket, Hamilton Fish became the candidate for lieutenant-governor. Fish represented the eastern end of the State, the conservative wing of the party, and New York City, where he was deservedly popular.

There were other parties in the field. The Abolitionists made nominations, and the Native Americans put up Ogden Edwards, a Whig of some prominence, who had served in the Assembly, in the constitutional convention of 1821, and upon the Supreme bench. But it was the action of the Anti-Renters, or national reformers as they were called, that most seriously embarrassed the Whigs and the Democrats. The Anti-Renters could scarcely be called a party, although they had grown into a political organisation which held the balance of power in several counties. Unlike the Abolitionists, however, they wanted immediate results rather than sacrifices for principle, and their support was deemed important if not absolutely conclusive. When the little convention of less than thirty delegates met at Albany in October, therefore, their ears listened for bids. They sought a pardon for the men convicted in 1845 for murderous outrages perpetrated in Delaware and Schoharie; and, although unsupported by proof, it was afterward charged and never denied, that, either at the time of their convention or subsequently before the election, Ira Harris produced a letter from John Young in which the latter promised executive clemency in

the event of his election. However this may be, it is not unlikely that Harris' relations with the Anti-Renters aided materially in securing Young's indorsement, and it is a matter of record that soon after Young's inauguration the murderers were pardoned, the Governor justifying his action upon the ground that their offences were political. The democratic Anti-Renters urged Silas Wright to give some assurances that he, too, would issue a pardon; but the Cato of his party, who never caressed or cajoled his political antagonists, declined to give any intimation upon the subject. Thereupon, as if to emphasise their dislike of Wright, the Anti-Rent delegates indorsed John Young for governor and Addison Gardiner for lieutenant-governor.

In the midst of the campaign William C. Bouck received the federal appointment of sub-treasurer in New York, under the act re-establishing the independent treasury system. This office was one of the most important in the gift of the President, and, because the appointee was the recognised head of the Hunkers, the impression immediately obtained that the government at Washington disapproved the re-election of Silas Wright. It became the sensation of the hour. Many believed the success of the Governor would make him a formidable candidate for President in 1848, and the impropriety of Polk's action occasioned much adverse criticism. The President and several members of his Cabinet privately assured the Governor of their warmest friendship, but, as one member of the radical wing expressed it, "Bouck's appointment became a significant indication of the guillotine prepared for Governor Wright in November."

Other causes than the Democratic feud also contributed to the discomfiture of Silas Wright. John Young had made an admirable record in the Assembly. He had also, at the outbreak of hostilities with Mexico, although formerly opposed to the annexation of Texas, been among the first to approve the war, declaring that "Texas was now bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, and that since the rights of our citizens had been trampled upon, he would sustain the country,

right or wrong."[2] It soon became evident, too, that the Anti-Renters were warm and persistent friends. His promise to pardon their leaders received the severe condemnation of the conservative Whig papers; but such censure only added to his vote in Anti-Rent counties. In like manner, Young's support of the canals and Wright's veto of the appropriation, strengthened the one and weakened the other in all the canal counties. Indeed, after the election it was easy to trace all these influences. Oneida, a strong canal county, which had given Wright eight hundred majority in 1844, now gave Young thirteen hundred. Similar results appeared in Lewis, Alleghany, Herkimer, and other canal counties. In Albany, an Anti-Rent county, the Whig majority of twenty-five was increased to twenty-eight hundred, while Delaware, another Anti-Rent stronghold, changed Wright's majority of nine hundred in 1844, to eighteen hundred for Young. On the other hand, in New York City, where the conservative Whig papers had bitterly assailed their candidate, Wright's majority of thirty-three hundred in 1844 was increased to nearly fifty-two hundred. In the State Young's majority over Wright exceeded eleven thousand,[3] and Gardiner's over Fish was more than thirteen thousand. The Anti-Renters, who had also indorsed one Whig and one Democratic canal commissioner, gave them majorities of seven and thirteen thousand respectively. Of eight senators chosen, the Whigs elected five; and of the one hundred and twenty-eight assemblymen, sixty-eight, the minority being made up of fifty Democrats and ten Anti-Renters. The Whig returns also included twenty-three out of thirty-four congressmen.

It was a sweeping victory—one of the sporadic kind that occur in moments of political unrest when certain classes are in rebellion against some phase of existing conditions. Seward, who happened to be in Albany over Sunday, pictured

[2] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 762.

[3] John Young, 198,878; Silas Wright, 187,306; Henry Bradley, 12,844; Ogden Edwards, 6306.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

the situation in one of his racy letters. "To-day," he says, "I have been at St. Peter's and heard one of those excellent discourses of Dr. Potter. There was such a jumble of wrecks of party in the church that I forgot the sermon and fell to moralising on the vanity of political life. You know my seat. Well, half-way down the west aisle sat Silas Wright, wrapped in a coat tightly buttoned to the chin, looking philosophy, which it is hard to affect and harder to attain. On the east side sat Daniel D. Barnard, upon whom 'Anti-Rent' has piled Ossa, while Pelion only has been rolled upon Wright. In the middle of the church was Croswell, who seemed to say to Wright, 'You are welcome to the gallows you erected for me.' On the opposite side sat John Young, the *saved* among the lost politicians. He seemed complacent and satisfied."[4]

The defeat of Silas Wright caused no real surprise. It seemed to be in the air. Everything was against him save his own personal influence, based upon his sincerity, integrity, and lofty patriotism. Seward had predicted the result at the time of Wright's nomination in 1844, and Wright himself had anticipated it. "I told some friends when I consented to take this office," he wrote John Fine, his Canton friend, in March, 1846, "that it would terminate my public life."[5] But the story of Silas Wright's administration as governor was not all a record of success. He was opposed to a constitutional convention as well as to a canal appropriation, and, by wisely preventing the former, it is likely the latter would not have been forced upon him. Without a convention bill and a canal veto, the party would not have divided seriously, John Young would not have become a popular hero, and the Anti-Renters could not have held the balance of power. To prevent the calling of a constitutional convention, therefore, or at least to have confined it within limits approved by the Hunkers, was the Governor's great

[4] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 34.

[5] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 756. *Appendix.*

opportunity. It would not have been an easy task. William C. Crain had a profound conviction on the subject, and back of him stood Michael Hoffman, the distinguished and unrelenting Radical, determined to put the act of 1842 into the organic law of the State. But there was a time when a master of political diplomacy could have controlled the situation. Even after permitting Crain's defeat for speaker, the appointment of Michael Hoffman to the judgeship vacated by Samuel Nelson's transfer to the federal bench would have placed a powerful lever in the Governor's hand. Hoffman had not sought the office, but the appointment would have softened him into a friend, and with Michael Hoffman as an ally, Crain and his legislative followers could have been controlled.

It is interesting to study the views of Wright's contemporaries as to the causes of his defeat.[6] One thought he should have forced the convention and veto issues in the campaign of 1845, compelling people and press to thresh them out a year in advance of his own candidacy; another believed if he had vetoed the convention bill a canal appropriation would not have passed; a third charged him with trusting too much in old friends who misguided him, and too little in new principles that had sprung up while he was absent in the United States Senate. One writer, apparently the most careful observer, admitted the influence of Anti-Renters and the unpopularity of the canal veto, but insisted that the real cause of the Governor's defeat was the opposition of the Hunkers, "bound together exclusively by selfish interests and seeking only personal advancement and personal gain."[7]

[6] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 691.

[7] *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 693.

"More serious than either of these [Anti-Rent disturbance and veto of canal appropriation] was the harm done by the quiet yet persistent opposition of the Hunkers. Nor can it be doubted that the influence of the Government at Washington was thrown against him in that critical hour. Governor Marcy was secretary of war; Samuel Nelson had just been appointed a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States; Governor Bouck held one of the most

This writer named Edwin Croswell as the leader whose wide influence rested like mildew upon the work of the campaign, sapping it of enthusiasm, and encouraging Democrats among Anti-Renters and those favourable to canals to put in the knife on election day. Such a policy, of course, it was argued, meant the delivery of Polk from a powerful opponent in 1848, and the uninterrupted leadership of William L. Marcy, who now wielded a patronage, greatly increased by the Mexican War, in the interest of the Hunkers and for the defeat of Silas Wright. If this were not true, continued the writer, William C. Bouck's appointment would have been delayed until after election, and the work of postmasters and other government officials, who usually contributed generously of their time and means in earnest support of their party, would not have been deadened.

There is abundant evidence that Governor Wright held similar views. "I have neither time nor disposition to speak of the causes of our overthrow," he wrote, a few days after his defeat was assured. "The time will come when they must be spoken of, and that plainly, but it will be a painful duty, and one which I do not want to perform. Our principles are as sound as they ever were, and the hearts of the great mass of our party will be found as true to them as ever. Hereafter I think our enemies will be open enemies, and against such the democracy has ever been able, and ever will be able to contend successfully."[8]

Silas Wright's defeat in no wise pained him personally. Like John Jay he had the habits of seclusion. Manual labour on the farm, his correspondence, and the preparation of an address to be delivered at the State Agricultural Fair in Sep-

influential offices in the city of New York—all these were members of that section of the party with which Governor Wright was not in sympathy. It was evident that he would not be able to maintain himself against an opposition of which the elements were so numerous, so varied, and so dangerous."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, p. 227.

[8] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 757. *Appendix.*

tember, occupied his leisure during the spring and summer of 1847.[9] "If I were to attempt to tell you how happy we make ourselves at our retired home," he wrote Governor Fairfield of Maine, "I fear you would scarcely be able to credit me. I even yet realise, every day and every hour, the relief from public cares, and if any thought about temporal affairs could make me more uneasy than another, it would be the serious one that I was again to take upon myself, in any capacity, that ever pressing load."[10] This was written on the 16th of August, 1847, and on the morning of the 27th his useful life came to an end. The day before he had spoken of apoplexy in connection with the death of a friend, as if he, too, had a premonition of this dread disease. When the end came, the sudden rush of blood to the head left no doubt of its presence.

The death of Silas Wright produced a profound sensation. Since the decease of DeWitt Clinton the termination of no public career in the State caused more real sorrow. Until then, the people scarcely realised how much they loved and respected him, and all were quick to admit that the history of the Commonwealth furnished few natures better fitted than his, morally and intellectually, for great public trusts. Perhaps he cannot be called a man of genius; but he was

[9] "Nothing can be imagined more admirable than the conduct of that great man under these trying circumstances. He returned at once to his beloved farm at Canton, and resumed, with apparent delight, the occupations of a rustic life. Visitors have related how they found him at work in his fields, in the midst of his farm-hands, setting an example of industry and zeal. His house was the shrine of many a pilgrimage; and, as profound regret at the loss of such a man from the councils of the State took the place of a less honourable sentiment, his popularity began to return. Already, as the time for the nomination of a President drew near, men were looking to him, as an illustrious representative of the principles and hereditary faith of the Democratic-Republican party, in whose hands the country would be safe, no matter from what quarter the tempest might come."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, p. 228.

[10] Jabez D. Hammond, *Political History of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 729.

a man of commanding ability, with that absolute probity and good sense which are the safest gifts of a noble character.

On the 12th of the following December, James Kent died in his eighty-fifth year. He had outlived by eighteen years his contemporary, John Jay; by nearly forty-five years his great contemporary, Alexander Hamilton; and by more than thirty years his distinguished predecessor, Chancellor Livingston. He was the last of the heroic figures that made famous the closing quarter of the eighteenth and the opening quarter of the nineteenth centuries. He could sit at the table of Philip Hone, amidst eminent judges, distinguished statesmen, and men whose names were already famous in literature, and talk of the past with personal knowledge from the time the colony graciously welcomed John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, as its governor, or threateningly frowned upon William Howe, viscount and British general, for shutting up its civil courts. When, finally, his body was transferred from the sofa in the library where he had written himself into an immortal fame, to the cemetery on Second Avenue, the obsequies became the funeral not merely of a man but of an age.

CHAPTER XI

THE FREE-SOIL CAMPAIGN

1847-1848

The fearless stand of Preston King in supporting the Wilmot Proviso[1] took root among the Radicals, as Seward prophesied, and the exclusion of slavery from territory obtained from Mexico, became the dominant Democratic issue in the State. Because of their approval of this principle the Radicals were called "Barnburners." Originally, these factional differences, as noted elsewhere, grew out of the canal controversy in 1838 and in 1841, the Conservatives wishing to devote the surplus canal revenues to the completion of the canals—the Radicals insisting upon their use to pay the state debt. Under this division, Edwin Croswell, William C. Bouck, Daniel S. Dickinson, Henry A. Foster, and Horatio Seymour led the Conservatives; Michael Hoffman, John A. Dix, and Azariah C. Flagg marshalled the Radicals. When the Conservatives, "hankering" after the offices, accepted unconditionally the annexation of Texas, they were called Hunkers. In like manner, the Radicals who sustained the Wilmot Proviso now became Barnburners, being likened to the farmer who burned his barn to get rid of rats. William L. Marcy, Silas Wright, Benjamin F. Butler, and the Van

[1] "To understand the issue presented by the Wilmot Proviso it must be observed that its advocates sustained it on the distinct ground that, as slavery had been abolished throughout the Mexican Republic, the acquisition of territory without prohibiting slavery would, on the theory asserted by the Southern States, lead to its restoration where it had ceased to exist, and make the United States responsible for its extension to districts in which universal freedom had been established by the fundamental law."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, p. 205.

Burens took no part in the canal controversy; but after Martin Van Buren's defeat in 1844 Marcy became a prominent Hunker and entered Polk's Cabinet, while Wright, Butler, and the Van Burens joined the Barnburners.

Hostilities between the Hunkers and Barnburners, growing out of the slavery question, began at the Democratic state convention, which convened at Syracuse, September 7, 1847.[2] Preceding this meeting both factions had been active, but the Hunkers, having succeeded in seating a majority of the delegates, promptly voted down a resolution embodying the principle of the Wilmot Proviso. Then the Barnburners seceded. There was no parleying. The breach opened like a chasm and the secessionists walked out in a body. This action was followed by an address, charging that the anti-slavery resolution had been defeated by a fraudulent organisation, and calling a mass convention for October 26, "to avow their principles and consult as to future action." This meeting became a gathering of Martin Van Buren's friends. It did not nominate a ticket, which would have defeated the purpose of the secession; but, by proclaiming the principles of Free-soil, it struck the keynote of popular sentiment; divided the Democratic party, and let the Whigs into power by thirty thousand majority. It made Millard Fillmore comptroller, Christopher Morgan secretary of state, Alvah

[2] "In the fall of 1847 I was a spectator at the Democratic state convention, held in Syracuse. The great chiefs of both factions were on the ground, and never was there a fiercer, more bitter and relentless conflict between the Narragansetts and Pequods than this memorable contest between the Barnburners and Hunkers. Silas Wright was the idol of the Barnburners. He had died on the 27th of the preceding August—less than two weeks before. James S. Wadsworth voiced the sentiments of his followers. In the convention some one spoke of doing justice to Mr. Wright. A Hunker sneeringly responded, 'It is too late; he is dead.' Springing upon a table Wadsworth made the hall ring as he uttered the defiant reply: 'Though it may be too late to do justice to Silas Wright, it is not too late to do justice to his assassins.' The Hunkers laid the Wilmot Proviso upon the table, but the Barnburners punished them at the election."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 159.

Hunt treasurer, Ambrose L. Jordan attorney-general, and Hamilton Fish lieutenant-governor to fill the vacancy occasioned by Addison Gardiner's election to the new Court of Appeals. The president of this seceders' mass-meeting was Churchill C. Cambreling, an old associate of Martin Van Buren, but its leader and inspiration was John Van Buren. He drafted the address to the people, his eloquence made him its chief orator, and his enthusiasm seemed to endow him with ubiquity.

John Van Buren was unlike the ordinary son of a President of the United States. He did not rely upon the influence or the prestige of his father.[3] He was able to stand alone—a man of remarkable power, who became attorney-general in 1845, and for ten years was a marked figure in political circles, his bland and convulsing wit enlivening every convention and adding interest to every campaign. But his chief interest was in his profession. He was a lawyer of great distinction, the peer and often the opponent of Charles O'Conor and William H. Seward. "He possessed beyond any man I ever knew," said Daniel Lord, "the power of eloquent, illustrative amplification, united with close, flexible logic."[4]

John Van Buren had, as well, a picturesque side to his life. In college he was expert at billiards, the centre of wit, and the willing target of beauty. Out of college, from the time he danced with the Princess Victoria at a court ball in London at the age of twenty-two, to the end of his interesting

[3] "There could hardly be a wider contrast between two men than the space that divided the Sage of Lindenwald from Prince John. In one particular, however, they were alike. Each had that personal magnetism that binds followers to leaders with hooks of steel. The father was grave, urbane, wary, a safe counsellor, and accustomed to an argumentative and deliberate method of address that befitted the bar and the Senate. Few knew how able a lawyer the elder Van Buren was. The son was enthusiastic, frank, bold, and given to wit, repartee, and a style of oratory admirably adapted to swaying popular assemblies. The younger Van Buren, too, was a sound lawyer."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 175.

[4] *History of the Bench and Bar of New York*, Vol. 1, p. 505.

and eventful life, he was known as "Prince John." His remarkable gifts opened the door to all that was ultra as well as noble. He led in the ballroom, he presided at dinners, he graced every forum, and he moved in the highest social circles. Men marvelled at his knowledge, at his unfailing equanimity, and at his political strength; but even to those who were spellbound by his eloquence, or captivated by his adroit, skilful conduct of a lawsuit, he was always "Prince John." There was not a drop of austerity or intolerance or personal hatred in him. The Dutch blood of his father, traced from the Princes of Orange to the days of the New Netherland patroons, kept him within the limits of moderation if not entirely unspotted, and his finished manners attracted the common people as readily as they charmed the more exclusive.

John Van Buren's acceptance of Free-soilism did not emanate from a dislike of slavery; nor did Free-soil principles root themselves deeply in his nature. His father had opposed the admission of Texas, and the son, in resentment of his defeat, hoping to make an anti-slavery party dominant in the State, if not in the nation, proclaimed his opposition to the extension of slavery. But, after the compromise measures of 1850 had temporarily checked the movement, he fell back into the ranks of the Hunkers, aiding President Pierce's election, and sustaining the pro-slavery administration of Buchanan. In after years Van Buren frequently explained his connection with the Free-soil revolt by telling a story of the boy who was vigorously removing an overturned load of hay at the roadside. Noticing his wild and rapid pitching, a passer-by inquired the cause of his haste. The boy, wiping the perspiration from his brow as he pointed to the pile of hay, replied, "Stranger, *dad's under there!*"

But whatever reasons incited John Van Buren to unite with the Free-soilers, so long as he advocated their principles, he was the most brilliant crusader who sought to stay the aggressiveness of slavery. From the moment he withdrew from the Syracuse convention, in the autumn of 1847,

until he finally accepted the compromise measures of 1850, he was looked upon as the hope of the Barnburners and the most dangerous foe of the Hunkers. Even Horatio Seymour was afraid of him. He did not advocate abolition; he did not treat slavery in the abstract; he did not transcend the Free-soil doctrine. But he spoke with such power and brilliancy that Henry Wilson, afterward Vice President, declared him "the bright particular star of the revolt."[5] He was not an impassioned orator. He spoke deliberately, and rarely with animation or with gesture; and his voice, high pitched and penetrating, was neither mellow nor melodious. But he was marvellously pleasing. His perennial wit kept his audiences expectant, and his compact, forceful utterances seemed to break the argument of an opponent as a hammer shatters a pane of glass. So great was his popularity at this time, that his return to the Democratic party became a personal sorrow to every friend of the anti-slavery cause. "Indeed, such was the brilliant record he then made," says Henry Wilson, "that had he remained true to the principles he advocated, he would unquestionably have become one of the foremost men of the Republican party, if not its accepted leader."[6]

Several historic conventions followed the secession of the Barnburners. Each faction held a state convention to select delegates to the Democratic national convention which met in Baltimore on May 22, 1848, and, on the appointed day, both Hunkers and Barnburners presented full delegations, each claiming admission to the exclusion of the other.[7] It was an anxious moment for Democracy. New York held the

[5] Henry Wilson, *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power of the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 142.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

[7] "The Barnburners made the Monumental City lurid with their wrath, frightening the delegates from the back States almost out of their wits."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 162. "Or, as one man said in a speech, 'the regular delegates might occupy half a seat apiece, provided each of them would let a Hunker sit on his lap.'"—*Ibid.*, p. 161.

key to the election; without its vote the party could not hope to win; and without harmony success was impossible. To exclude either faction, therefore, was political suicide, and, in the end, the vote was divided equally between them. To the politician, anxious for party success and hungry for office, perhaps no other compromise seemed possible. But the device failed to satisfy either side, and Lewis Cass was nominated for President without the participation of the State that must elect or defeat him.

Returning home, the Barnburners issued an address, written by Samuel J. Tilden, who fearlessly called upon Democrats to act independently. This led to the famous convention held at Utica in June. Samuel Young presided, Churchill C. Cambreling was conspicuous on the stage, David Dudley Field read a letter from Martin Van Buren condemning the platform and the candidate of the Baltimore convention, and Benjamin F. Butler, Preston King, and John Van Buren illuminated the principles of the Free-soil party in speeches that have seldom been surpassed in political conventions. In the end Martin Van Buren was nominated for President.

This assembly, in the ability and character of its members, contained the better portion of the party. Its attitude was strong, defiant, and its only purpose apparently was to create a public sentiment hostile to the extension of slavery. Nevertheless, it was divided into two factions, one actuated more by a desire to avenge the alleged wrongs of Van Buren, than to limit slavery. To this class belonged Churchill C. Cambreling, Samuel J. Tilden, John A. Dix, Sanford E. Church, Dean Richmond, John Cochrane, Benjamin F. Butler, and the Van Burens. On the anti-slavery side, Preston King, David Dudley Field, James S. Wadsworth, and William Cullen Bryant were conspicuous. Seven years later, these men were quick to aid in the formation of the Republican party; while the former, for the most part, continued with the Democratic party. But, whatever the motives that prompted them, their action strengthened the Buffalo con-

vention[8] which met on August 9, 1848, giving an impetus to the anti-slavery cause too strong for resentment or revenge to guide it.

There have been many important meetings in the history of American politics, but it may well be doubted if any convention, during the struggle with slavery, ever exalted the hearts of those who took part in it more than did this assembly of fearless representatives of the Free-soil party in Buffalo, the Queen City of the Lakes. The time was ripe for action, and on that day in August, men eminent and to grow eminent, sought the shade of a great tent on the eastern shore of Lake Erie. Among them were Joshua R. Giddings, the well-known Abolitionist; Salmon P. Chase, not yet famous, but soon to become a United States senator with views of slavery in accord with William H. Seward; and Charles Francis Adams who had already associated his name with that of his illustrious father in the growth of anti-slavery opinions in New England. Chase presided over the convention and Adams over the mass-meeting. At the outset, it was boldly asserted that they had assembled "to secure free soil for a free people;" and in closing they thrilled the hearts of all hearers with the memorable declaration that rang throughout the land like a blast from a trumpet, "We inscribe on our banner Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Labour, and Free Men." It was a remarkable convention in that it made no mistakes. Lewis Cass represented the South and its purposes, while Zachary Taylor lived in the South and owned

[8] "The nomination of Cass for the Presidency by the Democrats and Taylor by the Whigs led to the Buffalo convention of 1848. Pro-slavery Democrats were there to avenge the wrongs of Martin Van Buren. Free-soil Democrats were there to punish the assassins of Silas Wright. Pro-slavery Whigs were there to strike down Taylor because he had dethroned their idol, Henry Clay, in the Philadelphia convention. Anti-slavery Whigs were there, breathing the spirit of the departed John Quincy Adams. Abolitionists of all shades of opinion were present, from the darkest type to those of a milder hue, who shared the views of Salmon P. Chase."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, pp. 162-63.

four hundred slaves. Neither of these men could be supported; but, in the end, rather than put a fourth candidate into the field, it was resolved unanimously to indorse Martin Van Buren for President and Charles Francis Adams for Vice President. Daniel Webster ridiculed the idea of "the leader of the Free-*spoil* party becoming the leader of the Free-soil party;" but Charles Sumner, whose heart was in the cause, declared that "it is not for the Van Buren of 1838 that we are to vote, but for the Van Buren of to-day—the veteran statesman, sagacious, determined, experienced, who, at an age when most men are rejoicing to put off their armour, girds himself anew and enters the list as a champion of freedom."[9] To give further dignity and importance to the Free-soil movement, the nomination of John P. Hale, made by the Abolitionists in the preceding November, was withdrawn, and John A. Dix, then a Democratic senator, accepted the Barnburners' nomination for governor.[10]

[9] Charles Sumner, *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 144.

"It will be remembered that Van Buren, in his inaugural as President, pledged himself to veto any bill for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, unless sanctioned by Maryland and Virginia. Anti-slavery men took great umbrage to this pledge, and while Butler at the Buffalo convention was graphically describing how the ex-President, now absorbed in bucolic pursuits at his Kinderhook farm, had recently leaped a fence to show his visitor a field of sprouting turnips, one of these disgusted Abolitionists abruptly exclaimed, 'Damn his turnips! What are his present opinions about the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia?' 'I was just coming to that subject,' responded the oily Barnburner, with a suave bow towards the ruffled Whig. 'Well, you can't be a moment too quick in coming to it,' replied the captious interlocutor."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 164.

[10] "General Dix disapproved of the design to make separate nominations, thinking it unwise, and foreseeing that it would increase the difficulty of bringing about a reconciliation. But that he, a Democrat of the old school, should find himself associated with gentlemen of the Whig party, from whom he differed on almost every point, was a painful and distressing surprise. He was willing, if it must be so, to go with his own section of the Democratic party, though deeming their course not the wisest. But when it came to

The Hunkers were aghast. The movement that let the Whigs into power in 1847 had suddenly become a national party, with the most famous and distinguished Democrat at its head, while the old issues of internal improvement, the tariff, and the independent treasury were obscured by the intensity of the people's opposition to the extension of slavery. The Hunkers controlled the party machinery—the Barnburners held the balance of power. To add to the bitterness of the situation, Edwin Croswell, after a quarter of a century of leadership, had retired from editorial and political life, leaving no one who could fill his place. When the Democratic state convention assembled at Syracuse, therefore, it spent itself in rhetorical denunciation of the rebellious faction, and wasted itself in the selection of Reuben H. Walworth for governor and Charles O'Conor for lieutenant-governor. Neither was a popular nomination. Walworth was the last of the chancellors. He came into notice as an ardent Bucktail in the days of DeWitt Clinton, and, upon the retirement of Chancellor Kent in 1828 succeeded to that important and lucrative office. He was a hard worker and an upright judge; but he did not rank as a great jurist. The lawyers thought him slow and crabbed, and his exclusion from the office at the age of fifty-nine, after the adoption of the new Constitution in 1846, was not regretted. But Chancellor Walworth had two traits which made him a marked figure in the Commonwealth—an enthusiasm for his profession that spared no labour and left no record unsearched; and an enthusiastic love for the Church.

Of Charles O'Conor's remarkable abilities, mention occurs elsewhere. His conservatism made him a Democrat of the extreme school. In the Slave Jack case and the Lemmon slave case, very famous in their day, he was counsel for the

an alliance with Whigs and Abolitionists he lost all heart in the movement. This accounts for his strong expressions in after years to justify himself from the charge of being an Abolitionist and false to his old faith."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, p. 239.

slave-holders; and at the close of the Civil War he became the attorney for Jefferson Davis when indicted for treason. O'Conor's great power as a speaker added much to the entertainment of the campaign of 1848, but whether he would have beaten his sincere, large-hearted, and affectionate Whig opponent had no third party divided the vote, was a mooted question at the time, and one usually settled in favour of the Chautauquan.

The Whigs had reason to be hopeful. They had elected Young in 1846 by eleven thousand, and, because of the Barnburner secession, had carried the State in 1847 by thirty thousand. Everything indicated that their success in 1848 would be no less sweeping. But they were far from happy. Early in June, 1846, long before the capture of Monterey and the victory of Buena Vista, the Albany *Evening Journal* had suggested that Zachary Taylor was in the minds of many, and in the hearts of more, for President in 1848. Thurlow Weed went further. He sent word to the brilliant officer that he need not reply to the numerous letters from men of all political stripes offering their support, since the presidential question would take care of itself after his triumphant return from Mexico. But, in the spring of 1848, the question became embarrassing. Taylor was a slave-holder. Many northern Whigs were deeply imbued with anti-slavery sentiments, and the action of the Free-soilers was increasing their sensitiveness. "What plagues me most of all," wrote Washington Hunt to Weed, "is to think how I, after all I have said against slavery and its extension, am to look the Wilmot Proviso people in the face and ask them to vote for a Southern slave-holder."[11] Yet Taylor was a conquering hero; and, although little was known of his political sentiments or sympathies, it was generally believed the Democrats would nominate him for President if the Whigs did not.

As the year grew older it became apparent that Henry Clay was the choice of a large portion of the Whigs of the country. Besides, Daniel Webster had reappeared as a can-

[11] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 165.

didate; Winfield Scott had the support of his former New York friends; and Horace Greeley, "waging a quixotic war against heroes," as Seward expressed it, was sure of defeating Taylor even if shaken in his confidence of nominating Clay. "I hope you see your way through this difficulty," Hunt again wrote Weed. "You are like a deacon I know. His wife said it always came natural to him to see into the doctrine of election."[12] Weed believed that Zachary Taylor, if not nominated by the Whigs, would be taken up by the Democrats, and he favoured the Southerner because the election of Jackson and Harrison convinced him that winning battles opened a sure way to the White House. But Thurlow Weed was not a stranger to Taylor's sympathies. He had satisfied himself that the bluff old warrior, though a native of Virginia and a Louisiana slave-holder, favoured domestic manufactures, opposed the admission of Texas, and had been a lifelong admirer of Henry Clay; and, with this information, he went to work, cautiously as was his custom, but with none the less energy and persistence. Among other things, he visited Daniel Webster at Marshfield to urge him to accept the nomination for Vice President. The great statesman recalled Weed's similar errand in 1839, and the memory of Harrison's sudden death now softened him into a receptive mood; but the inopportune coming of Fletcher Webster, who reported that his father's cause was making tremendous progress, changed consent into disapproval, and for the second time in ten years Webster lost the opportunity of becoming President.

When the Whig national convention met in Philadelphia on June 8, Thurlow Weed did not doubt the ability of Taylor's friends to nominate him; but, in that event, several prominent delegates threatened to bolt. It was an anxious moment. The success of the Whig party and the ascendancy of Weed's leadership in New York were at stake. It was urged by the anti-slavery men with great vehemence that Taylor was a "no-party man," and that as a born Southerner

[12] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 167.

and large slave-holder he could not be trusted on the slavery question. But when the five candidates were finally placed in nomination, and a single ballot taken, it was found, as Weed had predicted, that the hero of Buena Vista was the one upon whom the Whigs could best unite. With few exceptions, the friends of Clay, Webster, Scott, and John M. Clayton could go to Taylor better than to another, and on the fourth ballot, amidst anger and disappointment, the latter was nominated by sixty majority.

For the moment, the office of Vice President seemed to go a-begging, as it did in the convention of 1839 after the defeat of Henry Clay. Early in the year Seward's friends urged his candidacy; but he gave it no encouragement, preferring to continue the practice of his profession, which was now large and lucrative. John Young, who thought he would like the place, sent a secret agent to Mexico with letters to Taylor. Young's record as governor, however, did not commend him for other honours, and the scheme was soon abandoned. As the summer advanced Abbott Lawrence of Massachusetts became the favourite; and for a time it seemed as if his nomination would be made by acclamation; but, after Taylor's nomination and Clay's defeat, many delegates promptly declared they would not have "cotton at both ends of the ticket"—referring to Taylor as a grower and Lawrence as a manufacturer of cotton. In this crisis, and after a stormy recess, John A. Collier, a leading lawyer of Binghamton, who had served in the Twenty-second Congress and one year as state comptroller, suddenly took the platform. In a stirring speech, in which he eloquently pictured the sorrow and bitterness of Clay's friends, he hopefully announced that he had a peace-offering to present, which, if accepted, would, in a measure, reconcile the supporters of all the defeated candidates and prevent a fatal breach in the party. Then, to the astonishment of the convention, he named Millard Fillmore for Vice President, and asked a unanimous response to his nomination. This speech, though not pitched in a very exalted key, was so subtile and telling, that it threw the con-

vention into applause. Collier recalled Fillmore's fidelity to his party; his satisfactory record in Congress, especially during the passage of the tariff act of 1842; his splendid, if unsuccessful canvass, as a candidate for governor in 1844, and his recent majority of thirty-eight thousand for comptroller, the largest ever given any candidate in the State. At the time, it looked as if a unanimous response might be made; but the friends of Lawrence rallied, and at the close of the ballot Fillmore had won by only six votes. For Collier, however, it was a great triumph, giving him a reputation as a speaker that later efforts did not sustain.

To anti-slavery delegates, the Philadelphia convention was a disappointment. It seemed to lack courage and to be without convictions or principles. Like its predecessor in 1839 it adopted no resolutions and issued no address. The candidates became its platform. In voting down a resolution in favour of the Wilmot Proviso, many delegates believed the party would prove faithless on the great issue; and fifteen of them, led by Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, proposed a national convention of all persons opposed to the extension of slavery, to be held at Buffalo early in August. "It is fortunate for us," wrote Seward, "that the Democratic party is divided."[13] But the New Yorkers, some of whom found encouragement in the nomination of Fillmore, who had thus far been inflexible upon the slavery question, patiently waited for the result of the Whig state convention, which met at Utica on the 14th of September. By this time, as Seward and Weed predicted, Taylor's nomination had grown popular. Greeley, soon to be a candidate for Congress, advised the *Tribune's* readers to vote the Whig ticket, while the action of the Buffalo convention, though it united the anti-slavery vote, assured a division of the Democratic party more than sufficient to compensate for any Whig losses. Under these circumstances, the Utica convention assembled with reasonable hopes of success. It lacked the spirit of the band of resolute Free-soilers, who met in

[13] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 71.

the same place on the same day and nominated John A. Dix for governor and Seth M. Gates of Wyoming for lieutenant-governor; but it gave no evidence of the despair that had settled upon the convention of the Hunkers in the preceding week.

One feature of the Whig state convention is worthy of notice. The great influence of the Anti-Renters who held the balance of power in the convention of 1846 had disappeared. The Governor's anti-rent friends urged his renomination with the earnest voice of a brave people; but John Young was destined to be the comet of a season only. His course in respect to appointments and to the Mexican War had alienated Thurlow Weed, and his pardon of the anti-rent rioters estranged the conservative Whigs. Although a shrewd politician, with frank and affable manners, as an administrative officer he lacked the tact displayed so abundantly as a legislator; and its absence seriously handicapped him. Twenty delegates measured his strength in a convention that took forty-nine votes to nominate. Under the Taylor administration, Young received an appointment as assistant treasurer in New York City—the office given to William C. Bouck in 1846—but his career may be said to have closed the moment he promised to pardon a lot of murderous rioters to secure an election as governor. With that, he passed out of the real world of state-craft into the class of politicians whose ambition and infirmities have destroyed their usefulness. He died in April, 1852, at the age of fifty.

Hamilton Fish was the favourite candidate for governor in the Utica convention. His sympathies leaned toward the conservatives of his party; but the moderation of his speech and his conciliatory manners secured the good wishes of both factions, and he received seventy-six votes on the first ballot. Fish was admittedly one of the most popular young men in New York City. He had never sought or desired office. In 1842, the friends of reform sent him to Congress from a strong Democratic district, and in 1846, after repeatedly and peremptorily declining, the Whig convention, to save the

party from disruption, compelled him to take the nomination for lieutenant-governor on the ticket with John Young. In 1847, after Addison Gardiner, by his appointment to the Court of Appeals, had vacated the lieutenant-governorship, the convention, in resentment of Fish's defeat by the Anti-Renters, again forced his nomination for the same office, and his election followed by thirty thousand majority. Fish was now thirty-nine years old, with more than two-score and five years to live. He was to become a United States senator, and to serve, for eight years, with distinguished ability, as secretary of state in the Cabinet of President Grant; yet, in all that period, he never departed from the simple, sincere life that he was living in September, 1848. Writing of him in the *Tribune,* on the day after his nomination for governor, Horace Greeley voiced the sentiment of men irrespective of party. "Wealthy without pride, generous without ostentation, simple in manners, blameless in life, and accepting office with no other aspiration than that of making power subserve the common good of his fellow citizens, Hamilton Fish justly and eminently enjoys the confidence and esteem of all who know him."[14]

On the first ballot, George W. Patterson of Chautauqua received eighty-four out of ninety-six votes for lieutenant-governor. In his gentle manners, simple generosity, and moderation of speech, Patterson was not unlike Hamilton Fish. He was a loyal friend of Seward, a constant correspondent of Weed, and a member of the inner circle of governing Whigs; he had been prominent as an Anti-Mason, satisfactory as a legislator, and impartial as a speaker of the Assembly; he was now recognised as a far-sighted, wise, and cautious politician. In guiding the convention to the selection of Hamilton Fish and George W. Patterson, it was admitted that Thurlow Weed's leadership vindicated his sagacity.

The political contest in New York, unlike that in the South and in some Western States, presented the novel feature of

[14] New York *Tribune,* September 15, 1848.

three powerful parties in battle array. The Free-soil faction was a strange mixture. Besides Barnburners, there were Conscience Whigs, Proviso Democrats, Land Reformers, Workingmen, and Abolitionists—a formidable combination of able and influential men who wielded the power of absolute disinterestedness, and who kept step with John Van Buren's trenchant and eloquent speeches which resounded through the State. Van Buren was the accepted leader, and in this campaign he reached the height of his reputation. His features were not striking, but in person he was tall, symmetrical, and graceful; and no one in the State could hold an audience with such delightful oratory and lofty eloquence.

The ablest Whig to oppose him was William H. Seward, who frequently followed him in localities where Whigs were likely to act with the Free-soil party. On the slavery question, Seward held views identical with those expressed by Van Buren; but he insisted that every Whig vote cast for the third party was only a negative protest against the slavery party. Real friends of emancipation must not be content with protests. They must act wisely and efficiently. "For myself," he declared, "I shall cast my suffrage for General Taylor and Millard Fillmore, freely and conscientiously, on precisely the same grounds on which I have hitherto voted."[15]

As in former presidential years, each party had its flags and banners, its drums and cannon, its bewildering variety of inscriptions and mottoes, and its multitude of speakers charging and countercharging inconsistencies and maladministration. The Whigs accused Cass with having printed two biographies, one for the South, in which he appeared as a slavery extensionist, and one for the North, in which he figured as a Wilmot Provisoist. To this accusation, Democrats retorted that the Whigs opposed annexation in the North and favoured it in the South; denounced the war and nominated its leading general; voted down the Wilmot Proviso in June, and upheld it in July.

[15] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 77.

In New York, New England, and in some parts of the West, the clear, comprehensive, ringing platform of the anti-slavery party had fixed the issue. Audiences became restless if asked to listen to arguments upon other topics. Opposition to slavery was, at last, respectable in politics. For the first time, none of his party deprecated Seward's advanced utterances upon this question, and from August to November he freely voiced his opinions. The series of professional achievements which began with the Freeman case was still in progress; but he laid them aside that he might pass through his own State into New England, and from thence through New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, into Ohio, where the result, as shown by the October election, was to be very close.

Seward was now in the fulness of his intellectual power. There was nothing sensational, nothing unfit in his speeches. He believed that the conscience of the people was a better guide than individual ambitions, and he inspired them with lofty desires and filled them with sound principles of action. "There are two antagonistic elements of society in America," said he, in his speech at Cleveland, "freedom and slavery. Freedom is in harmony with our system of government and with the spirit of the age, and is, therefore, passive and quiescent. Slavery is in conflict with that system, with justice, and with humanity, and is, therefore, organised, defensive, active, and perpetually aggressive. Freedom insists on the emancipation and elevation of labour. Slavery demands a soil moistened with tears and blood. These elements divide and classify the American people into two parties. Each of these parties has its court and sceptre. The throne of the one is amid the rocks of the Allegheny Mountains; the throne of the other is reared on the sands of South Carolina. One of these parties, the party of slavery, regards disunion as among the means of defence and not always the last to be employed. The other maintains the Union of the States, one and inseparable, now and forever, as the highest duty of the American people to themselves, to posterity, to mankind. It

is written in the Constitution that five slaves shall count equal to three freemen as a basis of representation, and it is written also, in violation of the Divine Law, that we shall surrender the fugitive slave who takes refuge at our fireside from his relentless pursuers. 'What, then,' you say; 'can nothing be done for freedom because the public conscience is inert?' Yes, much can be done—everything can be done. Slavery can be limited to its present bounds; it can be ameliorated; it can and must be abolished, and you and I can and must do it."[16]

This presented an epitome of Seward's views when spoken without restraint. His friends thought them "bold" and his opponents denounced them as "most perverse and dogmatic," but, whether bold or perverse, he devoted the chief part of every speech to them. He was not without humour, man's highest gift, but he had more of humanity; he spoke seriously and solemnly, usually to grave, sober, reflecting men of all professions and parties; and, at the end of two hours, dismissed them as if from an evening church service. At Boston, a Whig member of Congress from Illinois spoke with him, principally upon the maladministration of the Democrats and the inconsistencies of Lewis Cass. After the meeting, while sitting in their hotel, the congressman, with a thoughtful air, said to Seward: "I have been thinking about what you said in your speech to-night. I reckon you are right. We have got to deal with this slavery question, and got to give much more attention to it hereafter than we have been doing."[17] This was Seward's first meeting with Abraham Lincoln. The former was then forty-seven years old, the latter thirty-nine.

In New York, the campaign could have but one outcome. The Free-soil faction divided the Democratic vote nearly by two, giving Van Buren 120,000, Cass 114,000, and Taylor 218,000. The returns for governor varied but slightly from

[16] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 86.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

these figures.[18] In the country at large Taylor secured one hundred and sixty-three electoral votes and Cass one hundred and twenty-seven. But, a Whig majority of one hundred and four on joint ballot in the Legislature, and the election of thirty-one out of thirty-four congressmen, showed the wreckage of a divided Democracy in New York. The Hunkers elected only six assemblymen; the Free-soilers secured fourteen. The Whigs had one hundred and eight. Returns from all the counties and cities in no wise differed. The Hunkers had been wiped out. If the Free-soilers did not get office, they had demonstrated their strength, and exulted in having routed their adversaries. Although Martin Van Buren was not to leave his retirement at Lindenwald, the brilliant son had avenged his father's wrongs by dashing Lewis Cass rudely and ruthlessly to the ground.

[18] Hamilton Fish, 218,776; John A. Dix, 122,811; Reuben H. Walworth, 116,811; William Goodell, 1593.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

CHAPTER XII

SEWARD SPLITS THE WHIG PARTY

1849-1850

The Legislature of 1849 became the scene of a contest that ended in a rout. John A. Dix's term as United States senator expired on March 4, and the fight for the succession began the moment the Whig members knew they had a majority.

William H. Seward's old enemies seemed ubiquitous. They had neither forgotten his distribution of patronage, nor forgiven his interest in slaves and immigrants. To make their opposition effective, John A. Collier became a candidate. Collier wanted to be governor in 1838, when Weed threw the nomination to Seward; and, although his election as comptroller in 1841 had restored friendly relations with Weed, he had never forgiven Seward. It added strength to the coalition, moreover, that Fillmore and Collier were now bosom friends. The latter's speech at Philadelphia had made the Buffalonian Vice President, and his following naturally favoured Collier. It was a noisy company, and, for a time, its opposition seemed formidable.

"Fillmore and Collier came down the river in the boat with me," wrote Seward from New York on November 16, 1848. "The versatile people were full of demonstrations of affection to the Vice President, and Mr. Collier divided the honours. The politicians of New York are engaged in plans to take possession of General Taylor before he comes to Washington. Weed is to be supplanted, and that not for his own sake but for mine."[1] As the days passed intrigue

[1] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 87.

became bolder. Hamilton Fish, Washington Hunt, and other prominent members of the party, were offered the senatorship. "I wish you could see the letters I get," Hunt wrote to Weed. "If I wanted to excite your sympathy they would be sufficient. Some say Seward will be elected. More say neither Seward nor Collier will be chosen, but a majority are going for a third man by way of compromise, and my consent is invoked to be number three."[2] Then came the letter, purporting to be written by Seward, declaring that "Collier must be defeated, or our influence with the Administration will be curtailed. You must look to your members, and see the members from Cattaraugus, if possible. I think Patterson will take care of Chautauqua."[2a] Out of this forgery grew an acrimonious manifesto from Collier, who professed to believe that Seward was giving personal attention to the work of making himself senator. In the midst of this violent and bitter canvass, Horace Greeley wrote one of his characteristic editorials. "We care not who may be the nominee," said the *Tribune* of January 24, 1849. "We shall gladly coincide in the fair expression of the will of the majority of the party, but we kindly caution those who disturb and divide us, that their conduct will result only in the merited retribution which an indignant people will visit upon those who prostitute their temporary power to personal pique or selfish purposes."

Seward was continuously in Baltimore and Washington, studying briefs that had accumulated in his long absence during the campaign; but Weed, the faithful friend, like a sentinel on the watch-tower, kept closely in touch with the political situation. "The day before the legislative caucus," wrote an eye-witness, "the Whig members of the Legislature gathered around the editor of the *Evening Journal* for counsel and advice. It resembled a President's levee. He remained standing in the centre of the room, conversing with those about him and shaking hands with new-comers; but

[2] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 173.

[2a] New York *Herald*, December 1, 1848.

there was nothing in his manner to indicate the slightest mystery or excitement so common with politicians."[3]

The Whig senators met in caucus on January 29, and by a vote of twelve to eleven decided to join the Assembly. Then the fight began. William S. Johnson, a Whig senator from New York City, declared that he would neither vote for Seward in caucus nor support him in the Legislature. "It would be equivalent," he continued, "to throwing a firebrand into the South and aiding in the dissolution of the Whig party and of the Union." Thereupon the eleven withdrew from further participation in the proceedings. When the caucus of the two houses convened, fourteen members declared it inexpedient to support either Seward or Collier; but an informal ballot gave Seward eighty-eight votes and Collier twelve, with twenty-two scattering. Three days later, on joint ballot, Seward received one hundred and twenty-one out of one hundred and thirty Whig votes. "We were always confident that the caucus could have but one result," said the *Tribune,* "and the lofty anticipations which the prospect of Seward's election has excited will not be disappointed."

Successful as Seward had been in his profession since leaving the office of governor, he was not entirely happy. "I look upon my life, busy as it is, as a waste," he wrote, in 1847. "I live in a world that needs my sympathies, but I have not even time nor opportunity to do good."[4] His warm and affectionate heart seemed to envy the strife and obloquy that came to champions of freedom; yet his published correspondence nowhere directly indicates a desire to return to public life. "You are not to suppose me solicitous on the subject that drags me so unpleasantly before the public," he wrote Weed on January 26, 1849, three days before the caucus. "I have looked at it in all its relations, and cannot satisfy myself that it would be any better for me to succeed than to be beaten."[5] This assumed indifference, however,

[3] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed,* Vol. 2, p. 174.
[4] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward,* Vol. 2, p. 56.
[5] *Ibid.,* p. 97.

was written with a feeling of absolute confidence that he was to succeed, a confidence that brought with it great content, since the United States Senate offered the "opportunity" for which he sighed in his despondent letter of 1847. On the announcement of his election, conveyed to him by wire at Washington, he betrayed no feeling except one of humility. "I tremble," he wrote his wife, "when I think of the difficulty of realising the expectations which this canvass has awakened in regard to my abilities."[6] To Weed, he added: "I recall with fresh gratitude your persevering and magnanimous friendship."[7]

From the outset, difficulties confronted the new senator. The question of limiting slavery excited the whole country, and one holding his views belonged in the centre of the struggle. But strife for office gave him more immediate embarrassment. Apprehensive of party discord, Thurlow Weed, at a dinner given the Vice President and Senator, had arranged for conferences between them upon important appointments within the State; but Seward's first knowledge of the New York custom-house appointments came to him in an executive session for their confirmation. Seward, as Lincoln afterward said, "was a man without gall," and he did not openly resent the infraction of the agreement; but when Weed, upon reaching Washington, discovered that Fillmore had the ear of the simple and confiding President, he quickly sought the Vice President. Fillmore received him coldly. From that moment began an estrangement between Weed and the Buffalo statesman which was to last until both were grown gray and civil war had obliterated differences of political sentiment. For twenty years, their intimacy had been uninterrupted and constantly strengthening. Even upon the slavery question their views coincided, and, although Fillmore chafed under his growing preference for Seward and the latter's evident intellectual superiority, he had exhibited no impatience toward Weed. But Fillmore was now Vice President, with aspirations for the Presidency, and he saw in Seward a for-

[6] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 98.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

midable rival who would have the support of Weed whenever the Senator needed it. He rashly made up his mind, therefore, to end their relationship.

With Taylor, Weed was at his ease. The President remembered the editor's letter written in 1846, and what Weed now asked he quickly granted. When Weed complained, therefore, that the Vice President was filling federal offices with his own friends, the President dropped Fillmore and turned to the Senator for suggestions. Seward accepted the burden of looking after patronage. "I detest and loathe this running to the President every day to protest against this man or that,"[8] he wrote; but the President cheerfully responded to his requests. "If the country is to be benefited by our services," he said to the Secretary of the Treasury, "it seems to me that you and I ought to remember those to whose zeal, activity, and influence we are indebted for our places."[9]

While Weed employed his time in displacing Hunker office-holders with Whigs, the Democratic party was trying to reunite. It called for a bold hand. John Van Buren, with a courage born of genius, had struck it a terrible blow in the face of tremendous odds, the effect of which was as gratifying to the Barnburners as it was disastrous to the Hunkers. But, in 1849, the party professed to believe that a union of the factions would result in victory, since their aggregate vote in 1848 exceeded the Whig vote by sixteen thousand. It is difficult to realise the arguments which persuaded the Barnburners to rejoin their adversaries whom they had declared, in no measured terms, to be guilty of the basest conduct; but, after infinite labour, Horatio Seymour established constructive harmony and practical co-operation. "We are asked to compromise our principles," said John Van Buren. "The day of compromises is past; but, in regard to candidates for state offices, we are still a commercial people. We will unite with our late antagonists."[10]

[8] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 113.

[9] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 175.

[10] H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 165.

Seymour and Van Buren did not unite easily. From the first they were rivals. As an orator, Seymour was the more persuasive, logical, and candid—Van Buren the more witty, sarcastic, and brilliant. Seymour was conciliatory—Van Buren aggressive. Indeed, they had little in common save their rare mental and social gifts, and that personal magnetism which binds followers with hooks of steel. But they stood now at the head of their respective factions. When Van Buren, therefore, finally consented to join Seymour in a division of the spoils, the two wings of the party quickly coalesced in the fall of 1849 for the election of seven state officers. The Free-soil faction professed to retain its principles; and, by placing several Abolitionists upon the ticket, nine-tenths of that party also joined the combination. But the spirit of the Free-soiler was absent. The man whose genius and whose eloquence had been the most potent factor in discrediting the Hunkers now had no anti-slavery speeches to make and no anti-slavery resolutions to present. John Van Buren's identification with the great movement, which he prophesied would stand so strong and work such wonders, was destined, after he had avenged the insult to his father, to vanish like a breath. Nor did the coalition of Hunkers, Barnburners, and Abolitionists prove so numerous or so solid that it could sweep the State. It did, indeed, carry the Assembly by two majority, and with the help of a portion of the Anti-Renters, who refused to support their own ticket, it elected four minor state officers; but the Whigs held the Senate, and, with majorities ranging from fifteen hundred to five thousand, chose the comptroller, the secretary of state, and the treasurer. Washington Hunt, the popular Whig candidate for comptroller, led the ticket by nearly six thousand, a triumph that was soon to bring him higher honours.

The Whigs, however, were to have their day of trouble. The election of Taylor and Fillmore had fired the Southern heart with zeal to defend slavery. More than eighty members of Congress issued an address, drawn by John C.

Calhoun, rebuking the agitation of the slavery question, insisting upon their right to take slaves into the territories, and complaining of the difficulty of recovering fugitives. The Virginia Legislature affirmed that the adoption and attempted enforcement of the Wilmot Proviso would be resisted to the last extremity, and that the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia would be a direct attack upon the institution of the Southern States. These resolutions were indorsed by Democratic conventions, approved at public meetings, and amplified by state legislatures. In Missouri, Tennessee, and Kentucky the feeling quickly reached fever heat; in the cotton States sentiment boldly favoured "A Southern Confederacy." Sectional interest melted party lines. "The Southern Whigs want the great question settled in such a manner as shall not humble and exasperate the South," said the New York *Tribune;* "the Southern Democrats want it so settled as to conduce to the extension of the power and influence of slavery."

In the midst of this intense southern feeling Henry Clay, from his place in the United States Senate, introduced the historic resolutions which bear his name, proposing an amicable adjustment of all questions growing out of the subject of slavery. This series of compromises was to admit California, establish territorial governments in the regions acquired from Mexico without provision for or against slavery, pay the debt and fix the western boundary of Texas, declare it inexpedient to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, deny the right of Congress to obstruct the slave trade between States, and to enact a more stringent fugitive slave law. It was in January, 1850, that Clay opened the memorable debate upon these resolutions, which continued eight months and included Webster's great speech of the 7th of March. When the debate ended in September Zachary Taylor was dead, Millard Fillmore was President, a new Cabinet had been appointed, slavery remained undisturbed in the District of Columbia, Mexico and Utah had become territories open to slave-holders, and a new fugitive slave law

bore the approval of the new Chief Executive. During these months the whole country had been absorbed in events at Washington. Private letters, newspapers, public meetings, and state legislatures echoed the speeches of the three distinguished Senators who had long been in the public eye, and who, it was asserted at the time, were closing their life work in saving the Union.

In this discussion, Daniel S. Dickinson favoured compromise; William H. Seward stood firmly for his anti-slavery convictions. The latter spoke on the 11th of March. He opposed the fugitive slave law because "we cannot be true Christians or real freemen if we impose on another a chain that we defy all human power to lay on ourselves;"[11] he declared for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, "and if I shall be asked what I did to embellish the capital of my country, I will point to her freemen and say—these are the monuments of my munificence;" he antagonised the right to take slaves into new territories, affirming that the Constitution devoted the domain to union, to justice, and to liberty. "But there is a higher law than the Constitution," he said, "which regulates our authority over the domain, and devotes it to the same noble purposes." In treating of threats of disunion he looked with a prophet's eye fourteen years into the future. That vision revealed border warfare, kindred converted into enemies, onerous taxes, death on the field and in the hospital, and conscription to maintain opposing forces. "It will then appear that the question of dissolving the Union is a complex question; that it embraces the fearful issue whether the Union shall stand and slavery be removed by gradual, voluntary effort, and with compensation, or whether the Union shall be dissolved and civil war ensue, bringing on violent but complete and immediate emancipation. We are now arrived at that stage of our national progress when that crisis can be foreseen—when we must foresee it."[12]

A less fearless and determined nature must have been

[11] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 126. [12] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

overwhelmed by the criticism, the censure, and the insulting sneers which this speech provoked. Southern feeling dominated the Senate chamber. Many northern men, sincerely desirous of limiting slavery, preferred giving up the Wilmot Proviso for the sake of peace. Thousands of Whigs regarded dissent from Clay and Webster, their time-honoured leaders, as bold and presumptuous. In reviewing Seward's speech, these people pronounced it pernicious, unpatriotic, and wicked, especially since "the higher law" theory, taken in connection with his criticism of the fugitive slave law, implied that a humane and Christian people could not or would not obey it. But the Auburn statesman resented nothing and retracted nothing. "With the single exception of the argument in poor Freeman's case," he wrote, "it is the only speech I ever made that contains nothing I could afford to strike out or qualify."[13]

But Seward's speech did not influence votes. Clay's compromises passed amidst the wildest outbursts of popular enthusiasm. They appealed to a majority of both the great parties as a final settlement of the slavery question. In New York and other cities throughout the State, flags were hoisted, salutes fired, joy bells rung, illuminations flamed at night, and speakers at mass-meetings congratulated their fellow citizens upon the wisdom of a President and a Congress that had happily averted the great peril of disunion.

These exhibitions of gratitude were engrossing the attention of the people when the Whig state convention met at Utica on the 26th of September, 1850. Immediately, the approval of Seward's course assumed supreme importance. Unusual excitement had attended the selection of delegates. The new administration became aggressive. No secret was made of its purpose to crush Thurlow Weed; and when the convention assembled, Hugh Maxwell, collector of the port of New York, and John Young, sub-treasurer, were there to control it. A test vote for temporary chairman disclosed sixty-eight Radicals and forty-one Conservatives present, but

[13] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 129.

in the interest of harmony Francis Granger became the permanent president.

Granger was a man of honour and a man of intellect, whose qualities of fairness and fitness for public life have already been described. When he entered Harrison's Cabinet in 1841, as postmaster-general, the South classed him as an Abolitionist; when he left Congress in 1843, in the fulness of his intellectual strength, his home at Canandaigua became the centre of an admiring group of Whigs who preferred the lead of Clay and the conservative policy of Webster. He now appeared as an ally of President Fillmore. It was natural, perhaps, that in appointing a committee on resolutions, Granger should give advantage of numbers to his own faction, but the Radicals were amazed at the questionable action of his committee. It delayed its report upon the pretext of not being ready, and then, late in the evening, in the absence of many delegates, presented what purported to be a unanimous expression, in which Seward was left practically without mention. As the delegates listened in profound silence the majority became painfully aware that something was wanting, and, before action upon it could be taken, they forced an adjournment by a vote of fifty-six to fifty-one.

The next morning the Radicals exhibited a desire for less harmony and more justice. By a vote of seventy-three to forty-six the original resolutions were recommitted to an enlarged committee, and after nominating Washington Hunt for governor and George J. Cornwell for lieutenant-governor, substitute resolutions were adopted by a vote of seventy-four to forty-two. One difference between the original and the substitute centred in the organisation of new territories. The majority opposed any surrender or waiver of the exclusion of slavery in any act establishing a regular civil organisation; the minority thought that, since it was impossible to secure the Wilmot Proviso, an insistence upon which would prevent any territorial organisation, it would be better to organise them without it, relying upon nature and the known disposition of the inhabitants to follow the lead of Cali-

fornia. This difference, however, could probably have been healed had the Radicals not insisted that "the thanks of the Whig party are especially due to William H. Seward for the signal ability and fidelity with which he sustained those beloved principles of public policy so long cherished by the Whigs of the Empire State, expressed in state and county conventions as well as in the votes and instructions of the state legislature." Upon this resolution the Conservatives demanded a roll call, and when its adoption, by the surprising vote of seventy-five to forty, was announced, the minority, amidst the wildest excitement, left the hall in a body, followed by Francis Granger, whose silver gray hair gave a name to the seceders. Their withdrawal was not a surprise. Like the secession of the Barnburners three years before, loud threats preceded action. Indeed, William A. Duer, the Oswego congressman, admitted travelling from Washington to Syracuse with instructions from Fillmore to bolt the approval of Seward. But the secession seemed to disturb only the Silver-Grays themselves, who now drafted an address to the Whigs of the State and called a new convention to assemble at Utica on October 17.

The Democrats in their state convention, which met at Syracuse on September 11, repeated the policy of conciliation so skilfully engineered in 1849 by Horatio Seymour. They received Barnburner delegates, they divided the offices, and they allowed John Van Buren to rule. It mattered not what were the principles of the captivating Prince and his followers so long as they accepted "the recent settlement by Congress of questions which have unhappily divided the people of these States." Thus the Free-soil Barnburners disappeared as a political factor. Some of them continued to avow their anti-slavery principles, but no one had the temerity to mention them in convention. Men deemed it politic and prudent to affect to believe that the slavery question, which had threatened to disturb the national peace, was finally laid at rest. The country so accepted it, trade and commerce demanded it, and old political leaders conceded

it. In this frame of mind, delegates found it easy to nominate Horatio Seymour for governor and Sanford E. Church for lieutenant-governor. The next day the Abolitionists, tired of their union with Hunkers and Barnburners, nominated William L. Chaplin and Joseph Plumb.

The convention of the Silver-Grays, held at Utica in October, did not exalt its members. It was simply a protest. A lion-hearted man had presumed to voice his convictions, and, although the convention favoured exercising a liberal spirit of toleration toward the compromise measures, it refused to exercise such a spirit toward William H. Seward, or to tolerate him at all. It gave the President a flattering indorsement for his approval of the fugitive slave law, it accepted Washington Hunt as its nominee for governor, and it listened to several addresses, among them one from James O. Putnam of Buffalo; but the proceedings lacked the enthusiasm that springs from a clear principle, backed by a strong and resolute band of followers. The speech of Putnam, however, attracted wide attention. Putnam was a young man then, less than thirty-three years old, passionately devoted to Daniel Webster, and a personal friend of Millard Fillmore. As a speaker he was polished, smooth, and refined, and even when impassioned kept his passion well within conventional bounds. On this occasion his mellow and far-reaching voice, keyed to the pitch of sustained rhetoric, dropped his well-balanced and finely moulded sentences into the convention amidst hearty applause. He did not then see with the clearness of Seward's vision. He belonged rather to the more enlightened and intelligent conservatives who had begun to feel the ultimate disaster slavery must bring, and who desired that such disaster should be put off as long as possible; but the day was soon to dawn in which he would become a loyal supporter of the principles that were to be forever settled in the civil strife which Seward so vividly portrayed in the speech that created the Silver-Grays.

The recently adopted compromise did not become an issue

in the New York campaign of 1850. If its opponents could not approve, they deemed silence wise. The followers of Fillmore in the up-state counties generally acted with the Seward men in support of Washington Hunt; but a great meeting, held at Castle Garden, near the close of the campaign, partially succeeded in uniting Democrats and Administration Whigs in New York City. A letter was read from Daniel Webster, calling upon all good citizens not to rekindle the flames of "useless and dangerous controversy;" resolutions favouring a vigorous enforcement of the fugitive slave law were adopted; and a coalition ticket with Seymour at its head was agreed upon. This meeting, called a great popular protest against demagoguery, opened an aggressive canvass to defeat Hunt and destroy the Syracuse indorsement of Seward by raising the cry that Seward Whigs preferred civil war to a peaceable enforcement of the fugitive slave law. Seward took no part in this campaign. After Congress adjourned on the last day of September, he devoted the short time between the sessions to his law business. His friends, however, were active. Weed attacked the Castle Garden meeting with a bitterness and vigour rarely disclosed in the columns of the *Evening Journal,* and Greeley poured one broadside after another into what he regarded as the miserable mismanagement, blundering, and confusion of the Administration.

While waiting the result of the election, people were startled into sadness by the sudden death of Samuel Young at the age of seventy-two. He had retired in usual health, but died during the night. His distinguished career, covering nearly two-score years, was characterised by strong prejudices, violent temper, and implacable resentments, which kept him behind men of less aptitude for public service; but he was always a central figure in any assemblage favoured with his presence. He had a marvellous force of oratory. His voice, his gestures, his solemn pauses, followed by lofty and sustained declamation, proved irresistible and sometimes overwhelming in their effect. But it was his misfortune to

be an orator with jaundiced vision, who seemed not always to see that principles controlled oftener than rhetoric. Yet, he willingly walked on in his own wild, stormy way, apparently enjoying the excitement with no fear of danger. "In his heart there was no guile," said Horace Greeley; "in his face no dough."

It was several weeks after the election, before it was ascertained whether Seymour or Hunt had been chosen. Both were popular, and of about the same age. Washington Hunt seems to have devoted his life to an earnest endeavour to win everybody's good will. At this time Greeley thought him "capable without pretension," and "animated by an anxious desire to win golden opinions by deserving them." He had been six years in Congress, and, in 1849, ran far ahead of his ticket as comptroller. Horatio Seymour was no less successful in winning approbation. He had become involved in the canal controversy, but carefully avoided the slavery question. Greeley found it in his heart to speak of him as "an able and agreeable lawyer of good fortune and competent speaking talent, who would make a highly respectable governor." But 1850 was not Seymour's year. His associates upon the ticket were elected by several thousand majority, and day after day his own success seemed probable. The New York City combine gave him a satisfactory majority; in two or three Hudson river counties he made large gains; but the official count gave Hunt two hundred and sixty-two plurality,[14] with a safe Whig majority in the Legislature. The Whigs also elected a majority of the congressmen. "These results," wrote Thurlow Weed, "will encourage the friends of freedom to persevere by all constitutional means and through all rightful channels in their efforts to restrain the extension of slavery, and to wipe out that black spot wherever it can be done without injury to the rights and interests of others."[15]

[14] Washington Hunt, 214,614; Horatio Seymour, 214,352.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

[15] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 189.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WHIGS' WATERLOO

1850-1852

The Assembly of 1851 has a peculiar, almost romantic interest for New Yorkers. A very young man, full of promise and full of performance, the brilliant editor of a later day, the precocious politician of that day, became its speaker. Henry Jarvis Raymond was then in his thirty-first year. New York City had sent him to the Assembly in 1850, and he leaped into prominence the week he took his seat. He was ready in debate, temperate in language, quick in the apprehension of parliamentary rules, and of phenomenal tact. The unexcelled courtesy and grace of manner with which he dropped the measured and beautiful sentences that made him an orator, undoubtedly aided in obtaining the position to which his genius entitled him. But his political instincts, also, were admirable, and his aptness as an unerring counsellor in the conduct of complicated affairs always turned to the advantage of his party. There came a time, after the assassination of President Lincoln, when he made a mistake so grievous that he was never able to regain his former standing; when he was dropped from the list of party leaders; when his cordial affiliation with members of the Republican organisation ceased; when his removal from the chairmanship of the National Committee was ratified by the action of a state convention; but the sagacity with which he now commented upon what he saw and heard made the oldest members of the Assembly lean upon him. And when he came back to the Legislature in January, 1851, they put him in the speaker's chair.

Raymond seems never to have wearied of study, or to

have found it difficult easily to acquire knowledge. He could read at three years of age; at five he was a speaker. In his sixteenth year he taught school in Genesee County, where he was born, wrote a Fourth of July ode creditable to one of double his years, and entered the University of Vermont. As soon as he reached an age to appreciate his tastes and to form a purpose, he began equipping himself for the career of a political journalist. He was not yet twenty-one when he made Whig speeches in the campaign of 1840 and gained employment with Horace Greeley on the *New Yorker* and a little later on the *Tribune*. "I never found another person, barely of age and just from his studies, who evinced so much and so versatile ability in journalism as he did," wrote Greeley. "Abler and stronger men I may have met; a cleverer, readier, more generally efficient journalist I never saw. He is the only assistant with whom I ever felt required to remonstrate for doing more work than any human brain and frame could be expected long to endure. His services were more valuable in proportion to their cost than those of any one who ever worked on the *Tribune*."[1] In 1843, when Raymond left the *Tribune*, James Watson Webb, already acquainted with the ripe intelligence and eager genius of the young man of twenty-three, thought him competent to manage the *Courier and Enquirer*, and in his celebrated discussion with Greeley on the subject of socialism he gave that paper something of the glory which twelve years later crowned his labours upon the New York *Times*.

It was inevitable that Raymond should hold office. The readiness with which he formulated answers to arguments in the Polk campaign, his sympathy with the Free-soil movement, the canal policy, and the common school system, produced a marked impression upon the dawning wisdom of his readers. But it was near the end of his connection with the *Courier* before he yielded his own desires to the urgent solicitation of the Whigs of the ninth ward and went to the Assembly. He had not yet quarrelled with James Watson Webb.

[1] Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life*, pp. 138, 139.

That came in the spring of 1851 when he refused to use his political influence as speaker against Hamilton Fish for United States senator and in favour of the owner of the *Courier and Enquirer*. His anti-slavery convictions and strong prejudices against the compromise measures of 1850 also rapidly widened the gulf between him and his superior; and when the break finally came he stepped from the speaker's chair into the editorial management of the New York *Times*, his own paper, pure in tone and reasonable in price, which was destined to weaken the *Courier* as a political organ, to rival the *Tribune* as a family and party journal, and to challenge the *Herald* as a collector of news.

The stormy sessions of the Legislature of 1851 needed such a speaker as Raymond. At the outset, the scenes and tactics witnessed at Seward's election to the Senate in 1849 were repeated in the selection of a successor to Daniel S. Dickinson, whose term expired on the 4th of March. Webb's candidacy was prosecuted with characteristic zeal. For a quarter of a century he had been a picturesque, aggressive journalist, with a record adorned with libel suits and duels—the result of pungent paragraphs and bitter personalities—making him an object of terror to the timid and a pistol target for the fearless. On one occasion, through the clemency of Governor Seward, he escaped a two years' term in state's prison for fighting the brilliant "Tom" Marshall of Kentucky, who wounded him in the leg, and it is not impossible that Jonathan Cilley might have wounded him in the other had not the distinguished Maine congressman refused his challenge because he was "not a gentleman." This reply led to the foolish and fatal fray between Cilley and William J. Graves, who took up Webb's quarrel.

Webb was known as the Apollo of the press, his huge form, erect and massive, towering above the heads of other men, while his great physical strength made him noted for feats of endurance and activity. As a young man he held a minor commission in the army, but in 1827, at the age of twenty-five, he resigned to become the editor of the

Courier, which, in 1829, he combined with the *Enquirer.* For twenty years, under his management, this paper, first as a supporter of Jackson and later as an advocate of Whig policies, ranked among the influential journals of New York. After Raymond withdrew, however, it became the organ of the Silver-Grays, and began to wane, until, in 1860, it lapsed into the *World.*

Webb's chief title to distinction in political life was allegiance to his own principles regardless of the party with which he happened to be affiliated, and his fidelity to men who had shown him kindness. He followed President Jackson until the latter turned against the United States Bank, and he supported the radical Whigs until Clay, in 1849, defeated his confirmation for minister to Austria; but, to the last, he seems to have remained true to Seward, possibly because Seward kept him out of state's prison, although, in the contest for United States senator in 1851, Hamilton Fish was the candidate of the Seward Whigs. Fish had grown rapidly as governor. People formerly recognised him as an accomplished gentleman, modest in manners and moderate in speech, but his conduct and messages as an executive revealed those higher qualities of statesmanship that ranked him among the wisest public men of the State. Thurlow Weed had accepted rather than selected him for governor in 1848. "I came here without claims upon your kindness," Fish wrote on December 31, 1850, the last day of his term. "I shall leave here full of the most grateful recollections of your favours and good will."[2] This admission was sufficient to dishonour him with the Fillmore Whigs, and, although he became the caucus nominee for senator on the 30th of January, his opponents, marshalled by Fillmore office-holders in support of James Watson Webb, succeeded in deadlocking his election for nearly two months.[3]

[2] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed,* Vol. 2, p. 190.

[3] "The Whigs held the Senate by only two majority, and when the day for electing a United States senator arrived, sixteen Whigs voted for Fish, and fifteen Democrats voted for as many different candidates, so that the Fish Whigs could not double over upon

In the meantime, other serious troubles confronted the young speaker. The Assembly, pursuant to the recommendation of Governor Hunt, passed an act authorising a loan of nine million dollars for the immediate enlargement of the Erie canal. Its constitutionality, seriously doubted, was approved by Daniel Webster and Rufus Choate, and the Whigs, needing an issue for the campaign, forced the bill ahead until eleven Democratic senators broke a quorum by resigning their seats. The Whigs were scarcely less excited than the Democrats. Such a secession had never occurred before. Former legislators held the opinion that they were elected to represent and maintain the interests of their constituents —not to withdraw for the sake of indulging some petulant or romantic impulse because they could not have their own way. Two opposition senators had the good sense to take this view and remain at their post. Governor Hunt immediately called an extra session, and, in the campaign to fill the vacancies, six of the eleven seceders were beaten. Thus reinforced in the Senate, the Whig policy became the law; and, although the Court of Appeals, in the following May, held the act unconstitutional, both parties got the benefit of the issue in the campaign of 1851.

In this contest the Whigs followed the lead of the Democrats in avoiding the slavery question. The fugitive slave law was absorbing public attention. The "Jerry rescue" had not occurred in Syracuse; nor had the killing of a slave-holder in a negro uprising on the border of an adjoining State adver-

them. James W. Beekman, a Whig senator of New York City, who claimed that Fish had fallen too much under the control of Weed, voted for Francis Granger. Upon a motion to adjourn, Beekman voted 'yes' with the Democrats, creating a tie, which the lieutenant-governor broke by also voting in the affirmative. The Whigs then waited for a few weeks, but one morning, when two Democrats were in New York City, they sprung a resolution to go into an election, and, after an unbroken struggle of fourteen hours, Fish was elected. The exultant cannon of the victors startled the city from its slumbers, and convinced the Silver-Grays that the Woolly Heads still held the capitol."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 172.

tised the danger of enforcing the law; yet the Act had not worked as smoothly as Fillmore's friends wished. It took ten days of litigation at a cost of more than the fugitive's value to reclaim a slave in New York City. Trustworthy estimates fixed the number of runaways in the free States at fifteen thousand, and a southern United States senator bitterly complained that only four or five had been recaptured since the law's enactment. Enough had been done, however, to inflame the people into a passion. Ralph Waldo Emerson declared the Act "a law which every one of you will break on the earliest occasion—a law which no man can obey, or abet the obeying, without loss of self-respect and forfeiture of the name of gentleman."[4] Seward did not hesitate to publish similar sentiments. "Christendom," he wrote, "might be searched in vain for a parallel to the provisions which make escape from bondage a crime, and which, under vigorous penalties, compel freemen to aid in the capture of slaves."[5] The Albany *Evening Journal* declared that "the execution of the fugitive slave law violently convulses the foundations of society. Fugitives who have lived among us for many years cannot be seized and driven off as if they belonged to the brute creation. The attempt to recover such fugitives will prove abortive."[6]

It is impossible to read these expressions without believing that they were written under the inspiration of genuine emotion, and that so long as such conditions continued men of sentiment could think of little else. Danger to the Union, at least assumed danger, could not in any way soften their hearts or change their purposes. Yet the state conventions which met in Syracuse on September 10 and 11, 1851, talked of other things. The Democrats nominated a ticket divided between Hunkers and Barnburners; and, after condemning the Whig management of the canals as lavish, reckless, and

[4] J. E. Cabot, *Life of Emerson*, p. 578. Emerson's address at Concord, May 3, 1851.

[5] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 163.

[6] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 185.

corrupt, readopted the slavery resolutions of the previous year. The Whigs likewise performed their duty by making up a ticket of Fillmore and inoffensive Seward men, pledging the party to the enlargement of the Erie canal. Thus it was publicly announced that slavery should be eliminated from the thought and action of parties.

This policy of silence put the Whigs under painful restraint. The rescue of a fugitive at Syracuse by a band of resolute men, led by Gerrit Smith and Samuel J. May, and the killing of a slave-owner at Christiana, Pennsylvania, while attempting to reclaim his property, seriously disturbed the consciences of men who thought as did Emerson and Seward; but not a word appeared in Whig papers about the great underlying question which persistently forced itself on men's thoughts. Greeley wrote of the tariff and the iron trade; Seward spent the summer in Detroit on professional engagements; and Weed, whose great skill had aided in successfully guiding the canal loan through a legislative secession, continued to urge that policy as the key to the campaign as well as to New York's commerce. But after the votes were counted the Whigs discovered that they had played a losing game. Two minor state officers out of eight, with a tie in the Senate and two majority in the Assembly, summed up their possessions. The defeat of George W. Patterson for comptroller greatly distressed his friends, and the loss of the canal board, with all its officers, plunged the whole Whig party into grief. Several reasons for this unexpected result found advocates in the press. There were evidences of infidelity in some of the up-state counties, especially in the Auburn district, where Samuel Blatchford's law partnership with Seward had defeated him for justice of the Supreme Court; but the wholesale proscription in New York City by Administration or "Cotton Whigs," as they were called, fully accounted for the overthrow. It was taken as a declaration of war against Sewardism. "The majorities against Patterson and his defeated associates," said the *Tribune,* in its issue of November 20, "imply that no man who is recognised

as a friend of Governor Seward and a condemner of the fugitive slave law must be run on our state ticket hereafter, or he will be beaten by the Cotton influence in this city." Hamilton Fish took a similar view. "A noble, glorious party has been defeated—destroyed—by its own leaders," he wrote Weed. "Webster has succeeded better under Fillmore than he did under Tyler in breaking up the Whig organisation and forming a third party. I pity Fillmore. Timid, vacillating, credulous, unjustly supicious when approached by his prejudices, he has allowed the sacrifice of that confiding party which has had no honours too high to confer upon him. It cannot be long before he will realise the tremendous mistake he has made."[7]

What Hamilton Fish said the great majority of New York Whigs thought, and in this frame of mind they entered the presidential campaign of 1852. Fillmore, Scott, and Webster were the candidates. Fillmore had not spared the use of patronage to further his ambition. It mattered not that the postmaster at Albany was the personal friend of Thurlow Weed, or that the men appointed upon the recommendation of Seward were the choice of a majority of their party, the proscription extended to all who disapproved the Silver-Grays' bolt of 1850, or refused to recognise their subsequent convention at Utica. Under these circumstances thirst for revenge as well as a desire to nominate a winning candidate controlled the selection of presidential delegates; and in the round-up seven favoured Fillmore, two preferred Webster, while twenty-four supported Scott. Naturally the result was a great shock to Fillmore. The Silver-Grays had been growing heartily sick of their secession, and if they needed further evidence of its rashness the weakness of their leader in his home State furnished it.

Fillmore's strength proved to be chiefly in the South. His vigorous execution of the fugitive slave law had been more potent than his unsparing use of patronage; and when the Whig convention assembled at Baltimore on June 16 the

[7] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 196.

question whether that law should be declared a finality became of supreme importance. Fillmore could not stand on an anti-slavery platform, and a majority of the New Yorkers refused their consent to any sacrifice of principle. But, in spite of their protest, the influence of a solid southern delegation, backed by the marvellous eloquence of Rufus Choate, forced the passage of a resolution declaring that "the compromise acts, the act known as the fugitive slave law included, are received and acquiesced in by the Whig party of the United States as a settlement in principle and substance of the dangerous and exciting questions which they embrace. We insist upon their strict enforcement; and we deprecate all further agitation of the question thus settled, as dangerous to our peace, and will discountenance all efforts to continue or renew such agitation whenever, wherever, or however the attempt may be made." A roll call developed sixty-six votes in the negative, all from the North, and one-third of them from New York.

This was a Fillmore-Webster platform, and the first ballot gave them a majority of the votes cast, Fillmore having 133, Webster 29, Scott 131. The number necessary to a choice was 147. The activity of the Fillmore delegates, therefore, centred in an effort to concentrate the votes of the President and his secretary of state. Both were in Washington, their relations were cordial, and an adjournment of the convention over Sunday gave abundant opportunity to negotiate. When it became manifest that Webster's friends would not go to Fillmore, an extraordinary effort was made to bring the President's votes to Webster. This was agreeable to Fillmore, who placed a letter of withdrawal in the hands of a Buffalo delegate to be used whenever he deemed it proper. But twenty-two Southern men declined to be transferred, while the most piteous appeals to the Scott men of New York met with cold refusals. They professed any amount of duty to their party, but as regards the Fillmore combine they were implacable. They would listen to no terms of compromise while their great enemy remained in the field. Mean-

time, the Scott managers had not been asleep. In the contest over the platform, certain Southern delegates had agreed to vote for Scott whenever Fillmore reached his finish, provided Scott's friends supported the fugitive slave plank; and these delegates, amidst the wildest excitement, now began changing their votes to the hero of Lundy's Lane. On the fifty-third ballot, the soldier had twenty-six majority, the vote standing: Scott, 159; Fillmore, 112; Webster, 21.

The prophecy of Hamilton Fish was fulfilled. Fillmore now realised, if never before, "the tremendous mistakes he had made." Upon his election as Vice President, and especially after dreams of the White House began to dazzle him, he seemed to sacrifice old friends and cherished principles without a scruple. Until then, the Buffalo statesman had been as pronounced upon the slavery question as Seward; and after he became President, with the tremendous influence of Daniel Webster driving him on, it was not believed that he would violate the principles of a lifetime by approving a fugitive slave law, revolting to the rapidly growing sentiment of justice and humanity toward the slave. But, unlike Webster, the President manifested no feeling of chagrin or disappointment over the result at Baltimore. Throughout the campaign and during the balance of his term of office he bore himself with courage and with dignity. Indeed, his equanimity seemed almost like the fortitude of fatalism. No doubt, he was sustained by the conviction that the compromise measures had avoided civil war, and by the feeling that if he had erred, Clay and Webster had likewise erred; but he could have had no presentiment of the depth of the retirement to which he was destined. He was to reappear, in 1856, as a presidential candidate of the Americans; and, after civil war had rent the country in twain, his sympathy for the Union was to reveal itself early and with ardour. But the fugitive slave law, which, next to treason itself, had become the most offensive act during the ante-war crisis, filled the minds of men with a growing dislike of the one whose pen gave it life, and, in spite of his high character, his long

public career, and his eminence as a citizen, he was associated with Pierce and Buchanan, who, as Northern men, were believed to have surrendered to Southern dictation.[8]

In the national convention at Baltimore, which met June 1, 1852, the New York Democrats were likewise destined to suffer by their divisions. Lewis Cass, James Buchanan, and Stephen A. Douglas were the leading candidates; though William L. Marcy and Daniel S. Dickinson also had presidential ambitions. Marcy was a man of different mould from Dickinson.[9] With great mental resources, rare administrative ability, consummate capacity in undermining enemies, and an intuitive sagacity in the selection of friends, Marcy was an opponent to be dreaded. After the experiences of 1847 and 1848, he had bitterly denounced the Barnburners, refusing even to join Seymour in 1849 in his heroic efforts to reunite the party; but when the Barnburners, influenced by the Utica statesman, began talking of him for President in 1852 he quickly put himself in accord with that wing of his party. Instantly, this became a call to battle. The Hunkers, provoked at his apostacy and encouraged by the continued distrust of many Barnburners, made a desperate ef-

[8] "When Fillmore withdrew from the presidential office, the general sentiment proclaimed that he had filled the place with ability and honour. He was strictly temperate, industrious, orderly, and of an integrity above suspicion. If Northern people did not approve the fugitive slave law, they at least looked upon it with toleration. It is quite true, however, that after-opinion has been unkind to Fillmore. The judgment on him was made up at a time when the fugitive slave law had become detestable, and he was remembered only for his signature and vigorous execution of it."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 1, pp. 297, 301.

[9] "It was certain that Mr. Dickinson could not carry New York. . . . Governor Marcy was strongly urged in many quarters, and it was thought the State might be carried by him; but many were of the opinion that his friends kept his name prominently before the public with the hope of obtaining a cabinet appointment for him and thus securing the influence of that section of the New York Democracy to which he belonged. This was precisely the result that followed."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, p. 266.

fort, under the leadership of Dickinson, to secure a majority of the delegates for Cass. The plastic hand of Horatio Seymore, however, quickly kneaded the doubting Barnburners into Marcy advocates; and when the contest ended the New York delegation stood twenty-three for Marcy and thirteen for Cass.

Dickinson, who had been a steadfast friend of the South, relied with confidence upon Virginia and other Southern States whenever success with Cass seemed impossible. On the other hand, Marcy expected a transfer of support from Buchanan and Douglas if the break came. On the first ballot Cass had 116, Buchanan 93, Douglas 20, and Marcy 27; necessary to a choice, 188. As chairman of the New York delegation, Horatio Seymour held Marcy's vote practically intact through thirty-three ballots; but, on the thirty-fourth, he dropped to 23, and Virginia cast its fifteen votes for Dickinson, who, up to that time, had been honoured only with the vote of a solitary delegate. In the midst of some applause, the New Yorker, who was himself a delegate, thanked his Virginia friends for the compliment, but declared that his adherence to Cass could not be shaken.[10] Dickinson had carefully arranged for this vote. The day before, in the presence of the Virginia delegation, he had asked Henry B. Stanton's opinion of his ability to carry New York. "You or Marcy or any man nominated can carry New York," was the laconic reply. Dickinson followed Stanton out of the room to thank him for his courtesy, but regretted he did not confine his answer to him alone. After Virginia's vote Dickinson again sought Stanton's opinion as to its adherence. "It is simply a compliment," was the reply, "and will leave you on the next ballot," which it did, going to Franklin

[10] "I could not consent to a nomination here without incurring the imputation of unfaithfully executing the trust committed to me by my constituents—without turning my back on an old and valued friend. Nothing that could be offered me—not even the highest position in the Government, the office of President of the United States—could compensate me for such a desertion of my trust."—Daniel S. Dickinson, *Letters and Speeches*, Vol. 1, p. 370.

Pierce. "Dickinson's friends used to assert," continued Stanton, "that he threw away the Presidency on this occasion. I happened to know better. He never stood for a moment where he could control the Virginia vote—the hinge whereon all was to turn."[11]

In the meantime Marcy moved up to 44. It had been evident for two days that the favourite candidates could not win, and for the next thirteen ballots, amidst the greatest noise and confusion, the convention sought to discover the wisest course to pursue. Seymour endeavoured to side-track the "dark horse" movement by turning the tide to Marcy, whose vote kept steadily rising. When, on the forty-fifth ballot, he reached 97, the New York delegation retired for consultation. Seymour at once moved that the State vote solidly for Marcy; but protests fell so thick, exploding like bombshells, that he soon withdrew the motion. This ended Marcy's chances.[12] On the forty-ninth ballot, North Carolina started the stampede to Pierce, who received 282 votes to 6 for all others. Later in the day, the convention nominated William R. King of Alabama for Vice President, and adopted a platform, declaring that "the Democratic party of the Union will abide by, and adhere to, a faithful execution of the acts known as the compromise measures settled by the last Congress—the act for reclaiming fugitive slaves from service of labour included; which act, being designed to carry out an express provision of the Constitution, cannot with fidelity thereto

[11] H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 181.

[12] "Marcy held the war portfolio under Polk, but his conduct of the office had not added to his reputation, for it had galled the Administration to have the signal victories of the Mexican War won by Whig generals, and it was currently believed that the War Minister had shared in the endeavour to thwart some of the plans of Scott and Taylor."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 1, pp. 246-7.

"The conflict became terrific, until, when the ballots had run up to within one of fifty, the Virginia nominee was announced as the choice of the convention."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, p. 268.

be repealed, nor so changed as to destroy or impair its efficiency."

Some time before the convention it was suggested, with Marcy's approval, that the New York delegation should vote as a unit for Dickinson if he proved the stronger candidate outside the State, and, upon the same condition, a solid delegation should vote for Marcy. This proposition did not reach Dickinson until his leading friends had committed themselves by a second choice; but, in speaking of the matter to Thurlow Weed ten years afterward, Dickinson said that had it come in time he would cheerfully have accepted it, adding that whatever may have been his opinion in 1852, he now knew it would have resulted in Marcy's nomination.

The disturbance among the New York delegates at Baltimore had its influence at Syracuse when the Democratic state convention assembled on September 1. Seymour was the leading candidate for governor, and Dickinson opposed him with a bitterness born of a desire for revenge. The night before the convention Seymour's chances were pronounced desperate. Whatever disappointments had come at Baltimore were laid at his door. Seymour made Cass' defeat possible; Seymour refused to help Buchanan; Seymour was responsible for a dark horse; Seymour filled Marcy's friends with hopes of ultimate victory, only to heighten their disappointment in the end. All these allegations were merely founded upon his steadfastness to Marcy, and he might have answered that everything had been done with the approval of a majority of the New York delegation. But Dickinson was no match for the Utica statesman. Seymour's whole life had been a training for such a contest. As Roscoe Conkling said of him many years later, he had sat at the feet of Edwin Croswell and measured swords with Thurlow Weed. He was one of the men who do not lose the character of good fighters because they are excellent negotiators. Even the cool-headed and astute John Van Buren, who joined Dickinson in his support of John P. Beekman of New York City for governor,

found that Seymour could cut deeply when he chose to wield a blade.[13] Seymour, moreover, gave his friends great satisfaction by the energy with which he entered the gubernatorial contest. When the first ballot was announced he had 59 votes to Beekman's 7, with only 64 necessary to a choice. On the second ballot, the Utican had 78 and Beekman 3. This concluded the convention's contest. Sanford E. Church was then renominated for lieutenant-governor, and the Baltimore platform approved.

The Whig state convention met at Syracuse on September 22 and promptly renominated Washington Hunt for governor by acclamation. Raymond wanted it, and Greeley, in a letter to Weed, admitted an ambition, while a strong sentiment existed for George W. Patterson. Hunt had veered toward Fillmore's way of thinking. "The closing paragraphs of his message are a beggarly petition to the South," wrote George Dawson, the quaint, forceful associate of Weed upon the *Evening Journal*.[14] But Hunt's administration had been quiet and satisfactory, and there was little disposition to drop him. He did not have the patience of Hamilton Fish, but he resembled him in moderation of speech.

William Kent, a son of the Chancellor, received the nomination for lieutenant-governor. Kent was a scholarly, able lawyer. He had served five years upon the circuit bench by appointment of Governor Seward. He co-operated with Benjamin F. Butler in the organisation of the law school of the New York University, becoming one of its original lecturers, and was subsequently called to Harvard as a professor of

[13] "Seymour was among the most effective and eloquent platform orators in New York. Less electrical than John Van Buren, he was more persuasive; less witty, he was more logical; less sarcastic, he was more candid; less denunciatory of antagonists, he was more convincing to opponents. These two remarkable men had little in common except lofty ambition and rare mental and social gifts. Their salient characteristics were widely dissimilar. Seymour was conciliatory, and cultivated peace. Van Buren was aggressive, and coveted war."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 178.

[14] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 218.

law. Like his distinguished father he was a man of pure character, and of singular simplicity and gentleness.

The adoption of a platform gave the Whig delegates more trouble than the nomination of candidates. A large majority opposed the slavery plank of the Baltimore platform. But the Seward Whigs, having little faith in the ultimate result, accepted a general declaration that "an honest acquiescence in the action of the late national convention upon all subjects legitimately before it is the duty of every Whig." Horace Greeley suggested that "those who please can construe this concession into an approval."

In opening the canvass of 1852, the Whigs attempted to repeat the campaign of 1840. Scott's record in the War of 1812 was not less brilliant than Harrison's, and if his Mexican battles were not fought against the overwhelming odds that Taylor met at Buena Vista, he was none the less entitled to the distinction of a conqueror. It was thought proper, therefore, to start his political campaign where his military career began, and, as the anniversary of Lundy's Lane occurred in July, extensive preparations were made for celebrating the day at Niagara Falls, the nearest American point to the scene of his desperate courage. The great meeting, made up of large delegations from nearly every Northern State, rivalled in numbers and in enthusiasm the memorable meetings of the Harrison campaign. To add to the interest, two hundred and twenty officers and soldiers of the War of 1812, some of whom had taken part in the battle, participated in the festivities. Speakers declared that it inaugurated a new career of triumph, which might be likened to the onslaught of Lundy's Lane, the conflict of Chippewa, the siege of Vera Cruz, and the storm of Cerro Gordo; and which, they prophesied, would end in triumphant possession, not now of the Halls of the Montezumas, but of the White House of American Presidents. The meeting lasted two days. Thomas Ewing, of Ohio, acted as president, and among the speakers was Henry Winter Davis.

But this was the only demonstration that recalled the

Harrison campaign. The drum and cannon did conspicuous work, flags floated, and speakers found ready and patriotic listeners, but the hearts of many people were not enlisted in the discussion of tariffs and public improvements. They were thinking of the fugitive slave law and its enforcement, and some believed that while speakers and editors were charging Pierce with cowardice on the field of Churubusco they did not themselves have the courage to voice their honest convictions on the slavery question. As election drew near signs of victory disappeared. Conservative Whigs did not like the candidate and anti-slavery Whigs objected to the platform. "This wretched platform," Seward declared, "was contrived to defeat Scott in the nomination, or to sink him in the canvass."[15] Horace Greeley's spirited protest against the fugitive slave plank gave rise to the phrase, "We accept the candidate, but spit upon the platform." Among the business men of New York City an impression obtained that if Scott became President, Seward would control him; and their purpose to crush the soldier seemed to centre not so much in hostility to Scott as in their desire to destroy Seward. Greeley speaks of this "extraordinary feature" of the campaign. "Seward has been the burden of our adversaries' song from the outset," he writes; "and mercantile Whigs by thousands have ever been ready not merely to defeat but to annihilate the Whig party if they might thereby demolish Seward."[16] In answer to the charge of influencing Scott's

[15] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 188.

"Many thought: the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. Seward was the political juggler, or Mephistopheles, as some called him, and the result was regarded as his triumph."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 1, p. 262. "Some of the prominent Whig newspapers of Georgia declined to sustain Scott, because his election would mean Free-soilism and Sewardism. An address was issued on July 3 by Alexander H. Stephens, Robert Toombs, and five other Whig representatives, in which they flatly refused to support Scott because he was 'the favourite candidate of the Free Soil wing of the Whig party.'"—*Ibid.*, p. 262.

[16] New York *Tribune*, October, 1852.

administration, the Senator promptly declared that he would neither ask nor accept "any public station or preferment whatever at the hands of the President."[17] But this in nowise silenced their batteries. To the end of the canvass Scott continued to be advertised as the "Seward candidate."

After the September elections, it became manifest that something must be done to strengthen Whig sentiment, and Scott made a trip through the doubtful States of Ohio and New York. Although Harrison had made several speeches in 1840, there was no precedent for a presidential stumping tour; and, to veil the purpose of the journey, recourse was had to a statute authorising the general of the army to visit Kentucky with the object of locating an asylum for sick and disabled soldiers at Blue Lick Springs. He went from Washington by way of Pittsburg and returned through New York, stopping at Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Lockport, Rochester, Auburn, Syracuse, Rome, Utica, and Albany. Everywhere great crowds met him, but cheers for the hero mingled with cheers for a Democratic victory in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, indicating the certain election of Pierce in November. At Auburn, Seward referred to him as "the greatest of American heroes since the Revolutionary age." At Albany, John C. Spencer's presence recalled the distinguished services of Governor Tompkins and Chief Justice Ambrose Spencer in the War of 1812. "It was these men," said Scott, "who were aware of the position on the frontier, that urged me on to achieve something that would add to the future honour of our country." New York City received him with one of the largest ovations ever witnessed up to that time. He avoided politics in his speeches, insisting that he did not come to solicit votes. But he did not thereby help his cause or escape ridicule. Indeed, the ill-advised things said and done, created the impression that obtained thirty-two years later after the tour of James G. Blaine.

Though the Democrats at first accepted Franklin Pierce as they had received James K. Polk, coldness and distrust

[17] *Seward's Works*, Vol. 3, p. 416. Date of letter, June 26, 1852.

gradually disappeared. At Tammany's Fourth of July celebration, the presence of the prominent leaders who bolted in 1848 gave evidence of the party's reunion. The chief speaker was John Van Buren. Upon the platform sat John A. Dix, Preston King, and Churchill C. Cambreling. Of the letters read, one came from Martin Van Buren, who expressed pleasure that "the disturbing subject of slavery has, by the action of both the great parties of the country, been withdrawn from the canvass." Among the editors who contributed most powerfully to the Free-soil movement, William Cullen Bryant now supported Pierce on the theory that he and the platform were the more favourable to freedom.[18] John Van Buren's spacious mind and his genius for giving fascination to whatever he said convulsed his audience with wit and thrilled it with forceful statements. The country, he declared, was tired of the agitation of slavery, which had ceased to be a political question. It only remained to enforce in good faith the great compromise. He asserted that trade was good and the country prosperous, and that the Democratic party had gained the confidence of the people because it was a party of pacification, opposed to the agitation of slavery, insistent upon sacredly observing the compromises of the Constitution, and certain to bring settled political conditions.

Prince John proved himself equal to the occasion. If no longer the great apostle of the Free-soilers he was now the accepted champion of the Democracy. He had said what everybody believed who voted for Pierce and what many peo-

[18] "The argument of the *Post*, that the Democratic candidate and platform were really more favourable to liberty than the Whig, was somewhat strained; the editor failed to look the situation squarely in the face. He was, however, acting in perfect harmony with the prominent New York Democrats who had, four years previously, bolted the regular nomination. Salmon P. Chase, although still a Democrat, would not support Pierce, but gave his adherence to the Free-soil nominations, and tried hard, though in vain, to bring to their support his former New York associates."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 1, pp. 264-65.

ple thought who voted for Scott. There is no doubt his speech created an immense sensation. Greeley ridiculed it, Weed belittled it, and the Free-soilers denounced it, but it became the keynote of the campaign, and the Prince, with his rich, brilliant copiousness that was never redundant, became the picturesque and popular speaker of every platform. There were other Democratic orators.[19] Charles O'Conor's speeches were masterpieces of declamation, and James T. Brady, then thirty-seven years old, but already famous as one of the foremost criminal lawyers of the time, discovered the same magnetic eloquence that made him almost irresistible before a jury. His sentences, rounded and polished, rolled from his mouth in perfect balance. Van Buren was kaleidoscopic, becoming by turn humourous, sarcastic, gravely logical, and famously witty; Brady and O'Conor inclined to severity, easily dropping into vituperation, and at times exhibiting bitterness. Van Buren's hardest hits came in the form of sarcasm. It mattered not who heard him, all went away good-natured and satisfied with the entertainment. There were moments when laughter drowned his loudest utterances, when silence made his whispers audible, and when an eloquent epigram moistened the eye.

The election proved a Waterloo to the Whigs. Twenty-seven States gave majorities for Pierce, only four were for Scott. Seymour ran 22,000 votes ahead of Hunt.[20] In the Assembly the Democrats numbered eighty-five, the Whigs forty-three. Of the thirty-three congressmen, the Democrats elected twenty-one, the Whigs ten, the Free-soilers and Land Reformers one each. It was wittily said that the Whig party "died of an attempt to swallow the fugitive slave law." The election of Pierce and Seymour surprised none of the Whig leaders. Thurlow Weed, convinced of the hopelessness of

[19] John A. Dix spoke in the New England and the Middle States. From October 11 to 29 he made thirteen speeches "in the great canvass which is upon us."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, pp. 269, 271.

[20] Horatio Seymour, 264,121; Washington Hunt, 241,525.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

Whig success, went off to Europe for six months preceding the campaign. The *Tribune* talked of victory, but in his private correspondence Greeley declared that "we shall lose the Legislature and probably everything at home."

Winfield Scott seems to have been the only man really surprised. "He looked forward buoyantly to an easy and triumphant victory," says Weed, who dined with him on a Sunday in October.[21] But, though Pierce's election produced no surprise, his majority of 212 electoral votes astounded everybody. It eclipsed the result of the romantic campaign of 1840, and seemed to verify the assertions of John Van Buren, in his Fourth of July speech at Tammany Hall. The people were not only tired of slavery agitation, but trade was good, the country prosperous, and a reunited Democracy, by unreservedly indorsing the compromise measures of 1850, promised settled conditions.

It is not without historical interest to notice that Gerrit Smith, one of the most uncompromising opponents of slavery in any country, received an election to Congress in a district that gave Pierce and Seymour upward of one thousand majority. It showed that the smouldering fire, which had suddenly blazed out in the Free-soil campaign of 1848, was not extinguished by the coalition of Barnburners and Hunkers, and the acceptance of the great compromise by the two Baltimore conventions. Gerrit Smith was a noble example of the champions of freedom. He had not the passion of Garrison, or the genius of Henry Ward Beecher; but his deep voice of marvellous richness, the grace and dignity of his person, and the calm, gentle, dispassionate tone in which he declared his principles without fear, was to command the earnest and respectful attention of the national House of Representatives.

[21] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 219.

CHAPTER XIV

THE HARDS AND THE SOFTS

1853

In New York a Democratic victory had come to mean a succession of Democratic defeats. It was so after the victory of 1844; and it was destined to be so after the victory of 1852. But defeat occurred differently this time. In 1847 the Barnburners had seceded from the Hunkers; in 1853 the Hunkers seceded from the Barnburners. For six years the Barnburners had played bold politics. After defeating the Democratic ticket in 1847 and the state and national tickets in 1848, they returned to the party practically upon their own terms. Instead of asking admittance they walked in without knocking. They did not even apologise for their Free-soil principles. These they left behind because they had put them off; but the sorrow that follows repentance was absent. In the convention of 1849, John Van Buren was received like a prodigal son and his followers invited to an equal division of the spoils. Had the Hunkers declared they didn't know them as Democrats in their unrepentant attitude, the Barnburner host must have melted like frost work; but, in their desire to return to power, the Hunkers asked no questions and fixed no conditions. In the process of this reunion Horatio Seymour, the cleverest of the Hunkers, coalesced with the shrewdest of the Barnburners, who set about to capture William L. Marcy. Seymour knew of Marcy's ambition to become a candidate for the Presidency and of the rivalry of Cass and Dickinson; and so when he agreed to make him the Barnburners' candidate, Marcy covenanted to defeat Cass at Baltimore and Dickinson in New York. Though the Barn-

burners failed to make Marcy a nominee for President, he did not fail to defeat Cass and slaughter Dickinson.[1]

To add to the Hunkers' humiliation, President Pierce now sided with the Barnburners. He invited John A. Dix to visit him at Concord, and in the most cordial manner offered him the position of secretary of state.[2] This was too much for the pro-slavery Hunkers, for Dix had been a Free-soil candidate for governor in 1848; and the notes of defiance compelled the Concord statesman to send for Dix again, who graciously relieved him of his embarrassment.[3] Then the President turned to William L. Marcy, whose return from Florida was coincident with the intrigue against Dix. The former secretary of war had not mustered with the Free-soilers, but his attitude at Baltimore made him *persona non grata* to Dickinson. This kept Pierce in trouble. He wanted a New Yorker, but he wanted peace, and so he delayed action until the day after his inauguration.[4] When it proved to be

[1] "Seymour resisted the Barnburner revolt of 1847, and supported Cass for President in 1848. But he warmly espoused the movement to reunite the party the next year. He was in advance of Marcy in that direction. Seymour pushed forward, while Marcy hung back. Seymour rather liked the Barnburners, except John Van Buren, of whom he was quite jealous and somewhat afraid. But Marcy, after the experiences of 1847 and 1848, denounced them in hard terms, until Seymour and the Free-soil Democrats began talking of him for President in 1852, when the wily old Regency tactician mellowed toward them. Nothing was wanted to carry Marcy clear over except the hostility of Dickinson, who stood in his way to the White House. This he soon encountered, which reconciled him to the Barnburners."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 177.

[2] Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, p. 271.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 272.

[4] "To satisfy the greatest number was the aim of the President, to whom this problem became the subject of serious thoughts and many councils; and although the whole Cabinet, as finally announced, was published in the newspapers one week before the inauguration, Pierce did not really decide who should be secretary of state until he had actually been one day in office, for up to the morning of March 5, that portfolio had not been offered to Marcy."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 1, p. 389.

Marcy, with Dix promised the mission to France,[5] and Dickinson offered nothing better than the collectorship of the port of New York, the Hunkers waited for an opportunity to make their resentment felt.

This was the situation when the Democratic state convention met at Syracuse on September 13, 1853, with thirty-six contested seats. The faction that won these would legally control the convention. When the doors opened, therefore an eager crowd, amidst the wildest confusion and uproar, took possession of the hall, and, with mingled cheers and hisses, two chairmen were quickly nominated, declared elected, and forced upon the platform. Each chairman presided. Two conventions occupied one room; and that one faction might have peaceable possession it tried to put the other out. Finally, when out of breath and out of patience, both factions agreed to submit the contest for seats to a vote of the convention; and while the roll was being prepared the riotous proceedings were adjourned until four o'clock. But the Hunkers had seen and heard enough. It was evident the Barnburners proposed organising the convention after the tactics of the Hunkers in 1847; and, instead of returning to the hall, the Hunkers went elsewhere, organising a convention with eighty-one delegates, including the contestants. Here everything was done in order and with dispatch. Com-

[5] "The President offered Dix the mission to France. The time fixed was early in the summer of that year. Meanwhile passage was taken for Havre, preparations for a four years' residence abroad were made, and every arrangement was completed which an anticipated absence from home renders necessary. But political intrigue was instantly resumed, and again with complete success. The opposition now came, or appears to have come, mainly from certain Southern politicians. Charges were made—such, for example, as this: that General Dix was an Abolitionist, and that the Administration would be untrue to the South by allowing a man of that extreme and fanatical party to represent it abroad. . . . But though these insinuations were repelled, the influence was too strong to be resisted. In fact, the place was wanted for an eminent gentleman from Virginia."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, pp. 273, 274, 275.

mittees on permanent officers, resolutions, and nominations made unanimous reports to a unanimous convention, speeches were vociferously applauded, and the conduct of the Barnburners fiercely condemned. Governor Willard of Indiana, who happened to be present, declared, in a thrilling speech, that a "bully" stood ready to shoot down the Hunker chairman as he tried to call the convention to order. One of the delegates said he thought his life was in danger as he saw a man with an axe under his arm. But in their hall of refuge no one appeared to molest them; and by six o'clock the convention had completed its work and adjourned. Among those nominated for office appeared the names of George W. Clinton of Buffalo, the distinguished son of De-Witt Clinton, for secretary of state, and James T. Brady, the brilliant lawyer of New York City, for attorney-general. The resolutions indorsed the Baltimore platform, approved the President's inaugural on slavery, commended the amendment to the Constitution appropriating ten and a half million dollars for the enlargement and completion of the canals, and complimented Daniel S. Dickinson.

Meanwhile the Barnburners, having reassembled at four o'clock with eighty-seven delegates, sent word to the Hunkers that the convention was in session and prepared to organise. To this the chairman replied: "We do not consider ourselves in safety in an assemblage controlled and overawed by bullies, imported for that purpose." The Barnburners laughed, but in order to give the Hunkers time to sleep over it John Van Buren opposed further proceedings until the next day. In the evening, Horatio Seymour, now the Governor, met the convention leaders and with them laid out the morrow's work.

When Seymour began co-operating with the Barnburners, ambition prompted him to modify his original canal views so far as to oppose the Whig law authorising a loan of nine million dollars to enlarge the Erie canal. But after his election as governor, he recognised that no party could successfully appeal to the people in November, 1853, weighted with

such a policy; and with courage and genius for diplomatic negotiations, he faced the prejudices which had characterised the Barnburners during their entire history by favouring a constitutional amendment appropriating ten and a half millions for the enlargement of the Erie and the completion of the lateral canals. He had displayed a bold hand. The help of the Barnburners was needed to carry the amendment; and when the regular session expired without the accomplishment of his purpose Seymour quickly called an extra session. Even this dragged into the summer. Finally, in June, to the amazement of the people, the amendment passed and was approved. It was this work, which had so brilliantly inaugurated his administration, that Seymour desired indorsed, and, although it was morning, and not very early morning, before the labour of the night ended, it was agreed to adopt a canal resolution similar to that of the Hunkers and to indorse the Governor's administration, a compliment which the Hunkers carefully avoided.

After the settlement of the canal question, the work of the convention was practically done. A majority of the candidates were taken from the supporters of Cass in 1848, and included Charles H. Ruggles of Poughkeepsie, and Hiram Denio of Utica, whom the Hunkers had nominated for judges of the Court of Appeals. Ruggles was the wise chairman of the judiciary committee in the constitutional convention of 1846, and had been a member of the Court of Appeals since 1851. Denio was destined to become one of the eminent judges of the State. He was not always kind in his methods. Indeed, it may be said that he was one of those upright judges who contrived to make neither honour nor rectitude seem lovable qualities; yet his abilities finally earned him an enviable reputation as a justice of New York's court of last resort.

The factions differed little in men or in principle, and not at all upon the question of slavery. Two conventions were, therefore, absolutely unnecessary except upon the theory that the Hunkers, having little to gain and nothing

to lose, desired to embarrass the administrations of Governor Seymour and President Pierce. Their secession was certainly not prompted by fear of bullies. Neither faction was a stranger to blows. If fear possessed the Hunkers, it grew out of distrust of their supporters and of their numerical strength; and, rather than be beaten, they preferred to follow the example of the Barnburners in 1847, and of the Silver-Grays in 1850, two precedents that destroyed party loyalty to gratify the spirit of revenge.

It was at this time that the Hunkers were first called Hardshells or "Hards," and the Barnburners Softshells or "Softs." These designations meant that Dickinson and his followers never changed their principles, and that the Marcy-Seymour coalition trimmed its sails to catch the favouring breeze.

The action of the Hards in September, 1853, left the prestige of regularity with the Softs. The latter also had the patronage of the state and national administrations, the possession of Tammany, and the support of a large majority of the newspapers. But the Hards still treated the Softs as the real secessionists. "We have gotten rid of the mischievous traitors," said Daniel S. Dickinson, in his Buffalo speech of September 23, "and let us keep clear of them. It is true they say we are all on one platform, but when did we get there? No longer ago than last winter, when such resolutions as the platform now embodies were introduced into the Assembly, a cholera patient could not have scattered these very men more effectually."[6] Dickinson was not blessed with John Van Buren's humour. A flash of wit rarely enlivened his speeches, yet he delighted in attacking an adversary even if compelled to do it with gloomy, dogged rhetoric. Of all the Softs, however, Horatio Seymour was the one whom Dickinson hated. "It was the first time a governor was ever found in their convention," continued the Binghamton statesman, "and I know it will be the last time *that* Governor will be guilty of such an impropriety. He

[6] New York *Tribune*, September 27, 1853.

tempted them on with spoils in front, while the short boys of New York pricked them up with bowie knives in the rear."[7]

Seymour appears to have taken Dickinson's animosity, as he took most things, with composure. Nevertheless, if he looked for harmony on election day, the letters of Charles O'Conor and Greene C. Bronson, declining an invitation to ratify the Softs' ticket at a meeting in Tammany Hall, must have extinguished the hope. O'Conor was United States attorney and Bronson collector of the port of New York; but these two office-holders under Pierce used no varnish in their correspondence with the Pierce-Seymour faction. "As a lover of honesty in politics and of good order in society," wrote Bronson, "I cannot approve of nominations brought about by fraud and violence. Those who introduce convicts and bullies into our conventions for the purpose of controlling events must not expect their proceedings will be sanctioned by me." Then he betrayed the old conservative's deep dislike of the Radicals' canal policy, the memory of which still rankled. "If all the nominees were otherwise unexceptionable," he continued, "they come before the public under the leadership of men who have been striving to defeat the early completion of the public works, and after the shameless breach of past pledges in relation to the canals, there can be no reasonable ground for hope that new promises will be performed."[8]

Charles O'Conor, with the envenomed skill of a practised prosecutor coupled with a champion's coolness, aimed a heavier blow at the offending Softs. "Judging the tickets by the names of the leading members of the two conventions no reasonable doubt can be entertained which of them is most devoted to preserving union and harmony between the States of this confederacy. One of the conventions was uncontaminated by the presence of a single member ever known as an agitator of principles or practices tending in any de-

[7] New York *Tribune*, September 27, 1853.
[8] *Ibid.*, September 26, 1853.

gree to disturb that union and harmony; the leaders of the other were but recently engaged in a course of political action directly tending to discord between the States. It has, indeed, presented a platform of principles unqualifiedly denouncing that political organisation as dangerous to the permanency of the Union and inadmissible among Democrats; but when it is considered that the leaders, with one unimpressive exception, formerly withheld assent to that platform, or repudiated it, the resolution adopting it is not, in my opinion, entitled to any confidence whatever. I adopt that ticket which was made by a convention whose platform was adopted with sincerity and corresponds with the political life and actions of its framers."[9]

Bronson's letter was dated September 22, 1853; and in less than a month he was removed from his post as collector. In resentment, several county conventions immediately announced him as their candidate for governor in 1854. O'Conor continued in office a little longer, but eventually he resigned. "This proscriptive policy for opinion's sake will greatly accelerate and aggravate the decomposition of the Democratic party in this State," said the *Tribune*. "That process was begun long since, but certain soft-headed quacks had thought it possible, by some hocus pocus, to restore the old unity and health."[10]

The Whigs delayed their state convention until the 5th of October. Washington Hunt, its chairman, made a strong plea for harmony, and in the presence of almost certain victory, occasioned by a divided Democracy, the delegates turned their attention to the work of making nominations. It took three ballots to select a candidate for attorney-general. Among the aspirants were Ogden Hoffman of New York and Roscoe Conkling of Utica, then a young man of twenty-five, who bore a name that was already familiar from an honourable parentage. The people of Oneida had elected him district attorney as soon as he gained his majority, and,

[9] New York *Tribune*, September 26, 1853.
[10] *Ibid.*, October 24, 1853.

in the intervening years, the successful lawyer had rapidly proved himself a successful orator and politician who would have to be reckoned with.[11]

But Conkling did not get the coveted attorney-generalship. The great reputation of Ogden Hoffman, who has been styled "the Erskine of the American bar," and who then stood in isolated splendour among the orators of his party, gave him the right of way. Hoffman had served in Congress during Van Buren's administration and as United States attorney under Harrison and Tyler. He was now sixty years of age, a fit opponent to the brilliant Brady, twenty-two years his junior. "But for indolence," said Horace Greeley, "Hoffman might have been governor or cabinet minister ere this. Everybody likes him and he always runs ahead of his ticket."[12] There was also an earnest effort to secure a place upon the ticket for Elbridge G. Spaulding of Buffalo. He had been district attorney, city clerk, alderman, and mayor of his city. In 1848 he went to the Assembly and in 1849 to Congress. He had already disclosed the marked ability for finance that subsequently characterised his public and business career, giving him the distinguishing title of "father of the greenback." His friends now wanted to make him comptroller, but when this place went to James M. Cook of Saratoga, a thrifty banker and manufacturer, who had been state treasurer, Spaulding accepted the latter office. In its platform, the convention hailed with satisfaction the prospect of a speedy completion of the canals under Whig management, and boasted that the Democrats had at last been forced to accept the Whig policy, "so necessary to the greatness and prosperity of the State."

The success of the Whigs was inevitable. The secession of

[11] "With advancing years Mr. Conkling's temperament changed slightly. The exactions of legal life, and, to some extent, the needs of his political experience, apparently estranged him from the masses, although he was naturally one of the most approachable of men."—Alfred R. Conkling, *The Life and Letters of Roscoe Conkling*, pp. 203, 204.

[12] New York *Tribune*, October 6, 1853.

the Hards could not operate otherwise than in a division of the Democratic vote; but no one dreamed it would split the party in the middle. The Hards had fought against the prestige of party regularity, the power of patronage, the influence of Tammany, and the majority of the press, while the removal of Bronson served notice upon office-holders that those who favoured the Hards voluntarily mounted a guillotine. "Heads of this class," said Greeley, "rolled as recklessly as pumpkins from a harvest wagon."[13] Yet the Softs led the Hards by an average majority of only 312. It was a tremendous surprise at Washington. A cartoon represented Pierce and Marcy as Louis XVI and his minister, on the memorable 10th of August. "Why, this is revolt!" said the amazed King. "No, sire," responded the minister, "it is Revolution."

The Whigs polled 162,000 votes, electing their state officers by an average plurality of 66,000 and carrying the Legislature by a majority of forty-eight on joint ballot. Yet Ruggles and Denio, whose names appeared upon the ticket of each Democratic faction, were elected to the Court of Appeals by 13,000 majority, showing that a united Democratic party would have swept the State as it did in 1852.

The Whigs accepted their success as Sheridan said the English received the peace of Amiens—as "one of which everybody was glad and nobody was proud." Of the 240,000 Whigs who voted in 1852, less than 170,000 supported the ticket in 1853. Some of this shrinkage was doubtless due to the natural falling off in an "off year" and to an unusually stormy election day; but there were evidences of open revolt and studied apathy which emphasised the want of harmony and the necessity for fixed principles.

[13] New York *Tribune*, October 8, 1853.

CHAPTER XV

A BREAKING-UP OF PARTY TIES

1854

While the Hards and Softs quarrelled, and the Whigs showed weakness because of a want of harmony and the lack of principles, a great contest was being waged at Washington. In December, 1853, Stephen A. Douglas, from his place in the United States Senate, introduced the famous Nebraska bill affirming that the Clay compromise of 1850 had repealed the Missouri compromise of 1820. This sounded the trumpet of battle. The struggle of slavery and freedom was now to be fought to a finish. The discussion in Congress began in January, 1854, and ended on May 30. When it commenced the slavery question seemed settled; when it closed the country was in a ferment. Anti-slavery Whigs found companionship with Free-soil Democrats; the titles of "Nebraska" and "Anti-Nebraska" distinguished men's politics; conventions of Democrats, Whigs, and Free-soilers met to resist "the iniquity;" and on July 6 the Republican party, under whose banner the great fight was to be finished, found a birthplace at Jackson, Michigan.

Rufus King's part in the historic struggle of the Missouri Compromise was played by William H. Seward in the great contest over its repeal. He was the leader of the anti-slavery Whigs of the country, just as his distinguished predecessor had been the leader of the anti-slavery forces in 1820. He marshalled the opposition, and, when he finally took the floor on the 17th of February, he made a legal argument as close, logical, and carefully considered as if addressed to the Supreme Court of the United States. He developed the history of slavery and its successive compromises; he answered

every argument in favour of the bill; he appealed to its supporters to admit that they never dreamed of its abrogating the compromise of 1820; he ridiculed the idea that it was in the interest of peace; and he again referred to the "higher law" that had characterised his speech in 1850. "The slavery agitation you deprecate so much," he said in concluding, "is an eternal struggle between conservatism and progress; between truth and error; between right and wrong. You may sooner, by act of Congress, compel the sea to suppress its upheavings, and the round earth to extinguish its internal fires. You may legislate, and abrogate, and abnegate, as you will, but there is a Superior Power that overrules all; that overrules not only all your actions and all your refusals to act, but all human events, to the distant but inevitable result of the equal and universal liberty of all men."[1]

Seward was not an orator. He could hardly be called an effective speaker. He was neither impassioned nor always impressive; but when he spoke he seemed to strike a blow that had in it the whole vigour and strength of the public sentiment which he represented. So far as one can judge from contemporary accounts he never spoke better than on this occasion; or when it was more evident that he spoke with all the sincere emotion of one whose mind and heart alike were filled with the cause for which he pleaded. "Some happy spell," he wrote his wife, "seemed to have come over me and to have enabled me to speak with more freedom and ease than on any former occasion here."[2] Rhodes suggests that Seward "could not conceal his exultation that the Democrats had forsaken their high vantage ground and played into the hands of their opponents."[3] He became almost dramatic when he threw down his gauntlet at the feet of every member of the Senate in 1850 and challenged him to say that he knew, or thought, or dreamed, that by enacting the compromise of 1850 he was directly or indirectly abro-

[1] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 221.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 222.
[3] James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 1, p. 453.

gating, or in any degree impairing the Missouri Compromise. "If it were not irreverent," he continued, "I would dare call up the author of both the compromises in question, from his honoured, though yet scarcely grass-covered grave, and challenge any advocate of this measure to confront that imperious shade, and say that, in making the compromise of 1850, Henry Clay intended or dreamed that he was subverting or preparing the way for a subversion of his greater work of 1820. Sir, if that spirit is yet lingering here over the scene of its mortal labours, it is now moved with more than human indignation against those who are perverting its last great public act."[4]

Seward's speech created a profound impression throughout New York and the North. "It probably affected the minds of more men," says Rhodes, "than any speech delivered on that side of this question in Congress."[5] Senator Houston had it translated into German and extensively circulated among the Germans of western Texas. Even Edwin Croswell congratulated him upon its excellence. It again directed the attention of the country to his becoming a presidential candidate, about which newspapers and politicians had already spoken. Montgomery Blair's letter of May 17, 1873, to Gideon Welles, charges Seward with boasting that he had "put Senator Dixon up to moving the repeal of the Missouri Compromise as an amendment to Douglas' first Kansas bill, and had himself forced the repeal by that movement, and had thus brought life to the Republican party."[6] Undoubtedly Seward read the signs of the times, and saw clearly and quickly that repeal would probably result in a political revolution, bringing into life an anti-slavery party that would sweep the country. But the charge that he claimed to have suggested the repeal, smells too strongly of Welles' dislike of Seward, and needs other evidence than Blair's telltale letter to support it. It is on a par with Sen-

[4] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 220.
[5] James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 1, p. 453.
[6] Gideon Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, p. 68.

ator Atchinson's assertion, made under the influence of wine, that he forced Douglas to bring in the Nebraska bill—a statement that the Illinois Senator promptly stamped as false.

The temper of the people of the State began to change very soon after the introduction of Douglas' proposal. Remonstrances, letters, and resolutions poured in from Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, and other cities. Senator Fish presented a petition headed by the Bishop of the Episcopal Church and signed by a majority of the clergymen of New York City. Merchants, lawyers, and business men generally, who had actively favoured the compromise of 1850, now spoke in earnest protest against the repeal of the compromise of 1820. From the first, the Germans opposed it. Of their newspapers only eight out of eighty-eight were favourable. Public meetings, full of enthusiasm and noble sentiment, resembled religious gatherings enlisted in a holy war against a great social evil. The first assembled in New York City as early as January 30, six days after the repeal was agreed upon. Another larger meeting occurred on the 18th of February. It was here that Henry Ward Beecher's great genius asserted the fulness of its intellectual power. He had been in Brooklyn five years. The series of forensic achievements which began at the Kossuth banquet in 1851 had already made him the favourite speaker of the city, but, on the 18th of February, he became the idol of the anti-slavery host. Wit, wisdom, patriotism, and pathos, mingled with the loftiest strains of eloquence, compelled the attention and the admiration of every listener. When he concluded the whole assembly rose to do him honour; tears rolled down the cheeks of men and women. Everything was forgotten, save the great preacher and the cause for which he stood. "The storm that is rising," wrote Seward, "is such an one as this country has never yet seen. The struggle will go on, but it will be a struggle for the whole American people."[7] In the *Tribune* of May 17, Greeley said that Pierce and Douglas had made

[7] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 222.

more Abolitionists in three months than Garrison and Phillips could have made in half a century.

The agitation resulted in an anti-Nebraska state convention, held at Saratoga on the 16th of August. It was important in the men who composed it. John A. King called it to order; Horace Greeley reported the resolutions; Henry J. Raymond represented the district that had twice sent him to the Assembly; and Moses H. Grinnell became chairman of its executive committee. In the political struggles of two decades most of its delegates had filled prominent and influential positions. These men were now brought together by an absorbing sense of duty and a common impulse of resistance to the encroachments of slavery. People supposed a new party would be formed and a ticket nominated as in Michigan; but after an animated and at times stormy discussion, the delegates concluded that in principle too little difference existed to warrant the present disturbance of existing organisations. So, after declaring sentiments which were to become stronger than party ties or party discipline, it agreed to reassemble at Auburn on September 26.[8]

[8] "After the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska act, it would seem as if the course of the opposition were plain. That the different elements of opposition should be fused into one complete whole seemed political wisdom. That course involved the formation of a new party and was urged warmly and persistently by many newspapers, but by none with such telling influence as by the New York *Tribune*. It had likewise the countenance of Chase, Sumner, and Wade. There were three elements that must be united—the Whigs, the Free-soilers, and the Anti-Nebraska Democrats. The Whigs were the most numerous body and as those at the North, to a man, had opposed the repeal of the Missouri Compromise they thought, with some quality of reason, that the fight might well be made under their banner and with their name. For the organisation of a party was not the work of a day. Why, then, go to all this trouble, when a complete organisation is at hand ready for use? This view of the situation was ably argued by the New York *Times*, and was supported by Senator Seward. As the New York Senator had a position of influence superior to any one who had opposed the Kansas-Nebraska bill, strenuous efforts were made to get his adhesion to a new party movement, but they were without avail.

The Nebraska Act also became a new source of division to Democrats. Marcy's opposition, based upon apprehensions of its disastrous effect in New York, was so pronounced that he contemplated resigning as secretary of state—a step that his friends persuaded him to abandon. John Van Buren was equally agitated. "Could anything but a desire to buy the South at the presidential shambles dictate such an outrage?"[9] he asked Senator Clemens of Alabama. But nothing could stop the progress of the Illinois statesman; and, while the Whigs of New York ably and uniformly opposed repeal, Democrats broke along the lines dividing the Hards and the Softs. Of twenty-one Democratic congressmen, nine favoured and twelve opposed it. Among the former was William M. Tweed, the unsavoury boss of later years; among the latter, Reuben E. Fenton, Rufus W. Peckham, and Russell Sage. The Democratic press separated along similar lines. Thirty-seven Hards supported the measure; thirty-eight Softs opposed it.

The Hards held their state convention on the 12th of July. Their late trial of strength with the Softs had resulted in a drawn battle, and it was now their purpose to force the Pierce-Seymour Softs out of the party. The proceedings

'Seward hangs fire,' wrote Dr. Bailey. 'He agrees with Thurlow Weed.'—(Bailey to J. S. Pike, May 30, 1854, *First Blows of the Civil War*, p. 237.) 'We are not yet ready for a great national convention at Buffalo or elsewhere,' wrote Seward to Theodore Parker; 'it would bring together only the old veterans. The States are the places for activity just now.'—(*Life of Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 232.) Yet many Whigs who were not devoted to machine politics saw clearly that a new party must be formed under a new name. They differed, however, in regard to their bond of union. Some wished to go to the country with simply *Repeal of the Kansas-Nebraska act* inscribed on their banner. Others wished to plant themselves squarely on prohibition of slavery in all the territories. Still others preferred the resolve that not another slave State should be admitted into the Union. Yet after all, the time seemed ripe for the formation of a party whose cardinal principle might be summed up as opposition to the extension of slavery."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 45-7.

[9] New York *Evening Post*, February 11, 1854.

began with a challenge. Lyman Tremaine spoke of the convention as one in which the President had no minions; Samuel Beardsley, the chairman, after charging Pierce with talking one way and acting another, declared that the next Chief Executive would both talk and act like a national Democrat. Further, to emphasise its independence and dislike of the President, the convention nominated Greene C. Bronson for governor as the representative of Pierce's proscriptive policy for opinion's sake. But there was no disposition to criticise Pierce's pro-slavery policy. It favoured the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, proclaiming the doctrine of non-intervention by Congress and the right of the territories to make their own local laws, including regulations relating to domestic servitude. It also approved the recently ratified canal amendment and strongly favoured the prohibitive liquor law vetoed by Governor Seymour.

Greene C. Bronson's career had been distinguished. He had served as assemblyman, as attorney-general for seven years, as chief justice of the Supreme Court, and as an original member of the Court of Appeals. Although now well advanced in years, age had not cowed his spirit or lessened the purity of a character which shone in the gentleness of amiable manners; but his pro-slavery platform hit his consistency a hard blow. In 1819, as secretary of a mass-meeting called to oppose the Missouri Compromise, he had declared that Congress possessed the clear and indisputable power to prohibit the admission of slavery in any State or territory thereafter to be formed. If this was good law in 1819 it was good law in 1854, and the acceptance of a contrary theory put him at a serious disadvantage. His attitude on the liquor question also proved a handicap. He showed that the position of judge in interpreting the law was a very different thing from that of making the law by steering a party into power in a crucial campaign.

The convention of the Softs followed on September 6. Two preliminary caucuses indicated a strong anti-Nebraska sentiment. But a bold and resolute opposition, led by federal

officials and John Cochrane, the Barnburners' platform-maker, portended trouble. There was no disagreement on state issues. The approval of Seymour's administration settled the policy of canal improvement and anti-prohibition, but the delegates balked on the cunningly worded resolution declaring the repeal of the Missouri Compromise inexpedient and unnecessary, yet rejoicing that it would benefit the territories and forbidding any attempt to undo it. It put the stamp of Nebraska upon the proceedings, and the deathlike stillness which greeted its reading shook the nerves of the superstitious as an unfavourable omen. Immediately, a short substitute was offered, unqualifiedly disapproving the repeal as a violation of legislative good faith and of the spirit of Christian civilisation; and when Preston King took the floor in its favour the deafening applause disclosed the fact that the anti-Nebraskans had the enthusiasm if not the numbers. As the champion of the Wilmot Proviso concluded, the assembly resembled the Buffalo convention of 1848 at the moment of its declaration for free soil, free speech, free labour, and free men. But the roll call changed the scene. Of the 394 delegates, 245 voted to lay the substitute on the table.

This result was a profound surprise. The public expected different action and the preliminary caucuses showed an anti-Nebraska majority; but the Custom-House had done its work well. The promise of a nomination for lieutenant-governor had changed the mind of William H. Ludlow, chairman of the convention, who packed the committee on resolutions. Similar methods won fifty other delegates. But despite the shock, Preston King did not hesitate. He might be broken, but he could not be bent. Rising with dignity he withdrew from the convention, followed by a hundred others who ceased to act further with it. Subsequent proceedings reflected the gloom of a body out of which the spirit had departed. Delegates kept dropping out until only one hundred and ninety-nine remained to cheer the nomination of Horatio Seymour. On a roll call for lieutenant-governor, Philip Dor-

sheimer declared it a disgrace to have his name called in a convention that had adopted such a platform.

The Whig convention followed on September 20. A divided Democracy again made candidates confident, and eight or ten names were presented for governor. Horace Greeley thought it time his turn should come. He had been pronounced in his advocacy of the Maine liquor law and active in his hostility to the Nebraska Act. As these were to be the issues of the campaign, he applied with confidence to Weed for help. The Albany editor frankly admitted that his friends had lost control of the convention, and that Myron H. Clark would probably get the nomination. Then Greeley asked to be made lieutenant-governor. Weed reminded him of the outcry in the Whig national convention of 1848 against having "cotton at both ends of the ticket." "I suppose you mean," replied Greeley, laughing, "that it won't do to have prohibition at both ends of our state ticket."[10] But, though he laughed, the editor of the *Tribune* went away nettled and humiliated. In the contest, which became exciting,

[10] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 226.

"Mr. Greeley called upon me at the Astor House and asked if I did not think that the time and circumstances were favourable to his nomination. I replied that I did not think the time and circumstances favourable to his election, if nominated, but that my friends had lost control of the state convention. This answer perplexed him, but a few words of explanation made it quite clear. Admitting that he had brought the people up to the point of accepting a temperance candidate for governor, I remarked that another aspirant had 'stolen his thunder.' In other words, while he had shaken the temperance bush, Myron H. Clark would catch the bird. I informed Mr. Greeley that Know-Nothing or 'Choctaw' lodges had been secretly organised throughout the State, by means of which many delegates for Mr. Clark had been secured. Mr. Greeley saw that the 'slate' had been broken, and cheerfully relinquished the idea of being nominated. But a few days afterwards Mr. Greeley came to Albany, and said in an abrupt but not unfriendly way, 'Is there any objection to my running for lieutenant-governor?' . . . After a little more conversation, Mr. Greeley became entirely satisfied that a nomination for lieutenant-governor was not desirable, and left me in good spirits."—*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 226.

Greeley's friends urged his selection for governor without formally presenting his name to the convention; but on the third ballot Clark received the nomination, obtaining 82 out of the 132 votes cast.

Myron H. Clark, now in his forty-ninth year, belonged to the class of men generally known as fanatics. He was a plain man of humble pretensions and slender attainments. He was originally a cabinet-maker and afterward a merchant. Then he became a reformer. He sympathised with the Native Americans; he approved Seward's views upon slavery; and he interested himself in the workingmen. But his hobby was temperance. Its advocates made his home in Canandaigua their headquarters, and during the temperance revival which swept over the State in the early fifties, he aided in directing the movement. This experience opened his way, in 1851, to the State Senate. Here he displayed some of the legislative gifts that distinguished John Young. He had patience and persistence; he could talk easily and well; and, underneath his enthusiasm, lingered the shrewdness of a skilled diplomat. When, at last, the Maine liquor bill, which he had introduced and engineered, passed the Legislature, his name was a household word throughout the State. Seymour's veto of the measure strengthened Clark. People realised that a governor no less than a legislature was needed to make laws, and, with the spirit of reformers, the delegates demanded his nomination. To Weed it seemed hazardous; but a majority of the convention, believing that Clark's public career had been sagacious and upright, refused to take another.

Clark's nomination made the selection of a candidate for lieutenant-governor more difficult. The prohibitionists were satisfied; Greeley was not. In their anxiety, the delegates canvassed several names without result. Finally, with great suddenness and amidst much enthusiasm, Henry J. Raymond was nominated. This deeply wounded Greeley. "He had cheerfully withdrawn his own name," wrote Weed, "but he could not submit patiently to the nomination of his per-

sonal, professional, and political rival."[11] Greeley believed it was not the convention, but Weed himself, who brought it about. On the contrary, Weed declared that he had no thought of Raymond in that connection until his name was suggested by others. Nevertheless, the *Tribune's* editor held to his own opinion. "No other name could have been put upon the ticket so bitterly humbling to me,"[12] he afterward wrote Seward. To Greeley, Raymond was "The little Villain of the *Times;*" to Raymond, Greeley was "The big Villain of the *Tribune.*"[13] In any aspect, Raymond was an unfortunate nomination for Weed, since it began the quarrel that culminated in the defeat of Seward at Chicago in 1860.

Early in the campaign, Greeley favoured dropping the name of Whig and organising an anti-Nebraska or Republican party, with a ticket of Whigs and Democrats, as had been done in some of the Western States. But Seward and Weed, with a majority of the Whig leaders, thought that while fusion might be advisable wherever the party was essentially weak, as in Ohio and Indiana, it was wiser, in States like New York and Massachusetts where Whigs were in power, to retain the party name and organisation.[14] In so deciding, however, they agreed with Greeley that the platform should be thoroughly anti-Nebraska, and they gave it a touch that kindled the old fire in the hearts of the anti-slavery veterans. It condemned the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, approved the course of the New York senators

[11] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 227.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 280.

[13] In a letter to Charles A. Dana, dated March 2, 1856, Greeley indicates his feeling toward Raymond. "Have we got to surrender a page of the next *Weekly* to Raymond's bore of an address?" he says, referring to the Pittsburgh convention's appeal. "The man who could inflict six columns on a long-suffering public, on such an occasion, cannot possibly know enough to write an address."

[14] "I was a member of the first anti-Nebraska or Republican State Convention, which met at Saratoga Springs in September; but Messrs. Weed and Seward for a while stood aloof from the movement, preferring to be still regarded as Whigs."—Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life*, p. 314.

and representatives who resisted it, declared that it discharged the party from further obligation to support any compromise with slavery, and denounced "popular sovereignty" as a false and deceptive cry, "too flimsy to mislead any but those anxious to be deluded and eager to be led astray." This declaration of principles was summarised as "Justice, Temperance, and Freedom." One delegate, amidst great applause, said he felt glorified that the party was disenthralled and redeemed. Roscoe Conkling, a vice president, spoke of the convention as belonging to "the Republican party." Greeley declared the platform "as noble as any friend of freedom could have expected." Other state organisations also approved it. The anti-Nebraska convention, upon reassembling in Auburn on September 26, adopted the Whig ticket. The state temperance convention indorsed the nomination of Clark and Raymond, and the Free Democrats accepted Clark. This practically made a fusion ticket.

Early in October the Native Americans went into council. This organisation, which had elected a mayor of New York in 1844, suddenly revived in 1854; and, in spite of its intolerant and proscriptive spirit, the movement spread rapidly. Mystery surrounded its methods. It held meetings in unknown places; its influence could not be measured; and its members professed to know nothing. Thus it became known as the "Know-Nothing" party. Members recognised each other by the casual inquiry, "Have you seen Sam?" and when one of the old parties collapsed at a local election the reply came, "We have seen Sam." Its secrecy fascinated young men, and its dominant principle, "America for Americans," stirred them into unusual activity. The skilful use of patriotic phrases also had its influence. The "Star Spangled Banner" was its emblem, Washington its patron saint, and his thrilling command, "Put none but Americans on guard tonight," its favourite password. Henry Wilson of Massachusetts joined it as an instrument for destroying the old parties, which he regarded an obstacle to freedom; but Seward thought this was doing evil that good might come. Every-

thing is un-American, he argued, which makes a distinction between the native-born American and the one who renounces his allegiance to a foreign land and swears fealty to the country that adopts him. "Why," he asked, "should I exclude the foreigner to-day? He is only what every American citizen or his ancestor was at some time or other."[15]

The voting strength of this party in New York was estimated at 65,000, divided between Hards, Softs, and Whigs, with one-fifth each, and the Silver-Grays with two-fifths. On the question of putting up a state ticket, its council divided. The Silver-Grays, it was said, favoured candidates in order to defeat Clark; while the Whigs and Softs preferred making no nominations. In the end, Daniel Ullman, a reputable New York lawyer of mediocre ability, received the nomination for governor. The great overmastering passion of Ullman was a desire for office. For many years he had been a persistent and unsuccessful knocker at the door of city, county and state Whig conventions, and when the Know-Nothings appeared he turned to them to back his ambition. Possibly they knew that his parents were foreign-born, but the mystery surrounding his own birthplace became a comical feature of the canvass. It was claimed, upon what seemed proper evidence at the time, that Ullman was born in India and had not become a naturalised citizen of the United States. This made him ineligible as the candidate of his party, and disqualified him from serving as governor if elected.

The campaign opened with two clearly defined issues—limitation of the liquor traffic and condemnation of the Nebraska Act. Clark stood for both, Ullman stood for neither; Bronson and Seymour opposed prohibition and approved the Nebraska Act. Greeley declared that the two Democratic candidates differed only "as to whether the contempt universally felt for President Pierce should be openly expressed, or more decorously cherished in silence." As the canvass advanced, the real contest became prohibition, with Bronson

[15] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 234.

and Seymour apparently running a race for the liquor vote, while Ullman was silently securing the votes of men who thought the proscription of foreign-born citizens more important than either freedom or temperance. To the most adroit political prognosticators the situation was confused. Greeley estimated Clark's strength at 200,000, and that of the next highest, either Seymour or Bronson, at 150,000; but so little was known of the Know-Nothings that he omitted Ullman from the calculation. Another prophet fixed Ullman's strength at 65,000. The surprise was great, therefore, when the returns disclosed a Know-Nothing vote of 122,000, with Clark and Seymour running close to 156,000 each, and Bronson with less than 35,000. The people did not seem to have been thinking about Bronson at all. Seymour's veto commended the Governor to the larger cities, and it swept him on like a whirlwind. New York gave him 26,000. His election was conceded by the Whigs and claimed by the Democrats; but, after several weeks of anxious waiting, the official count made Clark the governor by a plurality of 309.[16] Including defective votes plainly intended for Seymour, Clark's plurality was only 153. Raymond ran 600 ahead of Clark, but his plurality over Ludlow was 20,000, since the latter's vote was 20,000 less than Seymour's. These twenty thousand preferred to vote for Elijah Ford of Buffalo, who ran for lieutenant-governor on the ticket with Bronson, possibly because of Ludlow's alleged perfidy at the Syracuse convention. Of the congressmen elected, twenty-five were Whigs, three Softs, two Anti-Nebraskans, and three Know-Nothings; in the Assembly there were eighty-one Whigs, twenty-six Softs, and seventeen Hards.

The result of the election could scarcely be called a Whig victory; but it was a popular rebuke to the Nebraska bill. Clark's majority, slender as it finally appeared by the official count, was due to the Whigs occupying common ground with

[16] Myron H. Clark, 156,804; Horatio Seymour, 156,495; Daniel Ullman, 122,282; Green C. Bronson, 33,850.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

Free-soilers who discarded party attachments in behalf of their cherished convictions. The Silver-Grays found a home with the Hards and the Know-Nothings, and many Democrats, unwilling to go to the Whigs, voted for Ullman.

It was the breaking-up of old parties. The great political crisis which had been threatening the country for many years was about to burst, and, like the first big raindrops that precede a downpour, the changes in 1854 announced its presence. It had been so long in coming that John W. Taylor of Saratoga, the champion opponent of the Missouri Compromise, was dying when Horace Greeley, at the anti-Nebraska convention held in Taylor's home in August, 1854, was writing into the platform of the new Republican party the principles that Taylor tried to write into the old Republican party in 1820. "Whoever reads Taylor's speeches in that troubled period," says Stanton, "will find them as sound in doctrine, as strong in argument, as splendid in diction, as any of the utterances of the following forty-five years, when the thirteenth amendment closed the controversy for all time."[17]

[17] H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 164. John W. Taylor served twenty consecutive years in Congress—a longer continuous service than any New York successor. Taylor also bears the proud distinction of being the only speaker from New York. Twice he was honoured as the successor of Henry Clay. He died at the home of his daughter in Cleveland, Ohio, in September, 1854, at the age of seventy, leaving a place in history strongly marked.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FORMATION OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

1854-5

The winter of 1855 became a turning-point in the career of William H. Seward. The voice of the anti-slavery Whigs proclaimed him the only man fitted by position, ability, and character to succeed himself in the United States Senate. To them he possessed all the necessary qualities for leadership. In his hands they believed the banner of opposition to the extension of slavery would be kept at the front and every other cause subordinated to it. This feeling was generously shared by the press of New York. "The repeal of the Missouri Compromise," said Henry J. Raymond in the *Times*, "has developed a popular sentiment in the North which will probably elect Governor Seward to the Presidency in 1856 by the largest vote from the free States ever cast for any candidate."[1] Even the Democratic *Evening Post* admitted that "Seward is in the ascendancy in this State."[2]

The Legislature was overwhelmingly Whig. Nearly three-fourths of the Assembly and two-thirds of the Senate had been elected as Whigs. Although Seward did not make a speech or appear publicly in the campaign of 1854, he had been active in seeing that members were chosen who would vote for him. But, notwithstanding the Whigs controlled the Legislature, many of them belonged to the Know-Nothings, whose noisy opposition soon filled the air with rumours of their intention to defeat Seward. The secrecy that veiled the doings of the order now concealed the strength of their numbers; but, as Seward's course had been sufficient to array

[1] New York *Times*, June 1, 1854.

[2] New York *Evening Post*, May 23, 1854.

its entire membership against him, there was little doubt of the attitude of all its representatives. Though he had not violently denounced them as Douglas did at Philadelphia, men of otherwise liberal opinions were angry because he seemed deliberately to support views opposed to their most cherished principles. His recommendation, while governor, to divide the public money with Catholic schools was recalled with bitter comment. The more recent efforts of Bishop Hughes, an ardent friend of the Senator, to exclude the Bible from the public schools, added to the feeling; while the coming of a papal nuncio to adjust a controversy in regard to church property between a bishop and a Catholic congregation in Buffalo which had the law of the State on its side, greatly increased the bitterness. Thus the old controversy was torn open, hostility increasing so rapidly that Thurlow Weed declared "there is very much peril about the senator question."

The plan of the Know-Nothings was to prevent an election in the Senate and then block a joint session of the two houses. This scheme had succeeded in defeating Ambrose Spencer in 1825 and Nathaniel P. Tallmadge in 1845, and there was no apparent reason why similar methods might not be invoked in 1855, unless the manifest inability of Seward's adversaries to unite upon some one opponent gave his supporters the upper hand. Millard Fillmore, Ira Harris, and Washington Hunt had their friends; but an anti-slavery Know-Nothing could not support Fillmore or Hunt, and a Silver-Gray Whig did not take kindly to Harris. This was the corner-stone of Greeley's confidence. Besides, the more bitter the criticism of Seward's record, the more inclined were certain senators of the Democratic party, who did not sympathise with the Know-Nothing aversion to foreigners, to support the Auburn statesman.[3] There was no hope for

[3] "There is about as much infidelity among Whigs at Albany as was expected; perhaps a little more. But there is also a counteracting agency in the other party, it is said, which promises to be an equilibrium."—F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 243.

Seymour, or Dix, or Preston King, and some of their friends in the Senate who admired the anti-slavery views of Seward could stop the play of the Know-Nothings.

Thus the contest grew fiercer. It was the chief topic in Albany. All debate ended in its discussion. When, at last, DeWitt C. Littlejohn, vacating the speaker's chair, took the floor for the distinguished New Yorker, the excitement reached its climax. The speaker's bold and fearless defence met a storm of personal denunciation that broke from the ranks of the Know-Nothings; but his speech minimised their opposition and inspired Seward's forces to work out a magnificent victory. "Our friends are in good spirits and reasonably confident," wrote Seward. "Our adversaries are not confident, and are out of temper."[1] Finally, on February 1, the caucus met. Five Whig senators and twenty assemblymen, representing the bulk of the opposition, were absent; but of the eighty present, seventy-four voted for Seward. This stifled the hope of the Silver-Gray Know-Nothings. Indeed, several of Seward's opponents now fell into line, giving him eighteen out of thirty-one votes in the Senate and sixty-nine out of one hundred and twenty-six in the Assembly. The five dissenting Whig senators voted for Fillmore, Ullman, Ogden Hoffman, Preston King, and George R. Babcock of Buffalo. Of the nineteen opposing Whig votes in the Assembly, Washington Hunt received nine and Fillmore four. When the two houses compared the vote in joint session, Henry J. Raymond, the lieutenant-governor, announced with evident emotion to a sympathetic audience which densely packed the Assembly chamber, that "William H. Seward was duly elected as a senator of the United States for six years from the fourth of March, 1855."

Seward did not visit Albany or Auburn during the contest. A patent suit kept him busy in New York City until the middle of January, after which he returned to his place in the Senate. He professed to "have the least possible anxiety about it," writing Weed early in December that "I would

[1] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 243.

not have you suffer one moment's pain on the ground that I am not likely to be content and satisfied with whatever may happen;"[5] yet a letter written five months afterward, on his fifty-fifth birthday, gives a glimpse of what defeat would have meant to him. "How happy I am," he says, "that age and competence bring no serious and permanent disappointment to sour and disgust me with country or mankind."[6] To Weed he shows a heart laden with gratitude. "I snatch a minute," he writes, "to express not so much my deep and deepened gratitude to you, as my amazement at the magnitude and complexity of the dangers through which you have conducted our shattered bark, and the sagacity and skill with which you have saved us from so imminent a wreck."[7] But Seward was not more amazed at the dangers he had escaped than at the great number of congratulations now pouring in from opponents. "Was ever anything more curious," he writes his wife, "than the fact that this result is scarcely more satisfactory to my truest friends, than, as it seems, to so many lifelong opponents? We have nothing but salutations and congratulations here. How strange the mutations of politics."[8]

After Seward's re-election the Kansas troubles began attracting attention. Governor Reeder fixed March 30, 1855, for the election of a territorial legislature, and just before it occurred five thousand Missourians, "with guns upon their shoulders, revolvers stuffing their belts, bowie-knives protruding from their boot-tops, and generous rations of whiskey in their wagons,"[9] marched into the territory to superintend the voting. This army intimidated such of the election judges as were not already pro-slavery men; and of six thousand votes, three-fourths of them were cast by the Missourians in the interest of slavery. The Northern press recorded the fraud. If further evidence were needed, Governor Reeder's speech, published in the New York *Times* of May 1, in which

[5] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 243.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 251. [7] *Ibid.*, p. 245. [8] *Ibid.*, p. 246.
[9] Spring's *Kansas*, p. 44; see also, Sara Robinson, *Kansas*, p. 27.

he declared that the fierce violence and wild outrages reported by the newspapers were in no wise exaggerated, set all controversy at rest. Instantly the North was in a ferment. The predominant sentiment demanded that Kansas should be free, and the excitement aroused by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was quickly rekindled when the South approved the murderous methods intended to make it a slave State. A journal published in the pro-slavery interest threatened "to lynch and hang, tar and feather, and drown every white-livered Abolitionist who dares to pollute our soil," and secret societies, organised for the purpose of keeping out Northern immigrants, resolved "that we recognise the institution of slavery as already existing in this territory, and advise slave-holders to introduce their property as early as possible."

As the year went on matters got worse. The territorial legislature, elected by admitted and wholesale fraud, unseated all free-state members whose election was contested, and proceeded to pass laws upholding and fortifying slavery. It declared it a felony, punishable by two years' imprisonment, to write or maintain that persons have not the right to hold slaves in the territory; it disqualified all anti-slavery men from sitting as jurors; it made one's presence in the territory sufficient qualification to vote; and it punished with death any one who assisted in the escape of fugitive slaves. When Reeder vetoed these acts the Legislature passed them over his head and demanded the Governor's removal. To add to the popular feeling, already deeply inflamed, President Pierce met this demand with affirmative action.

In the midst of this political excitement, the Hards met in convention at Syracuse on August 23, 1855. That party had been sorely punished in the preceding election; but it had in no way changed its attitude toward opponents. It refused to invite the Softs to participate; it denounced the national administration, and it condemned the Know-Nothings. Daniel E. Sickles, then thirty-four years old, who was destined to play a conspicuous part when the country was

in difficulty and the Government in danger, sought to broaden and liberalise its work; but the convention sullenly outvoted him. It approved the Nebraska Act, refused to listen to appeals in behalf of freedom in Kansas, and rebuked all efforts to restore the Missouri Compromise. Only upon the liquor question did it modify its former declarations. The Hards had started off in 1854 in favour of prohibition. But during the campaign, Bronson changed his position, or, as Greeley put it, "he first inclined to water, then to rum and water, and finally he came out all rum." To keep in accord with their leader's latest change, the delegates now declared the prohibitory law unconstitutional and demanded its repeal. This law, passed on April 9, 1855, and entitled "An Act for the prevention of intemperance, pauperism, and crime," permitted the sale of liquors for mechanical, chemical, and medicinal uses; but prohibited the traffic for other purposes. Its regulations, providing for search, prosecutions, and the destruction of forfeited liquors, were the very strongest, and its enforcement gave rise to much litigation. Among other things it denied trial by jury. In May, 1856, the Court of Appeals declared it unconstitutional. But while it lasted it gave the politicians much concern. The Democrats disapproved and other parties avoided it.

On August 29, the Softs met in convention. The Barnburners, who had vainly extended the olive branch to the Hards, now faced an array of anti-slavery delegates that would not condone the Kansas outrages. They would disapprove prohibition, commend Marcy's admirable foreign policy, and praise the President's management of the exchequer; but they would not countenance border ruffianism, encourage slavery propagandists in Kansas, or submit to the extension of slavery in the free territories. It was a stormy convention. For three days the contest raged; but when final action was taken, although the platform did not in terms censure Pierce's administration, it condemned the Kansas outrages which the President had approved by the removal of Governor Reeder, and disapproved the extension of slavery into

free territories. Among the candidates nominated were Samuel J. Tilden for attorney-general, and Samuel L. Selden of Rochester for judge of the Court of Appeals. Selden, who had been a district judge since 1847, was also nominated by the Hards.

The Kansas disclosures had the effect of drawing into closer communion the various shades of anti-slavery opinion in New York. Early in the summer, the question was earnestly considered of enlisting all men opposed to the aggressions of slavery under the banner of the Republican party, a political organisation formed, as has been stated, at Jackson, Michigan, on July 6, 1854. Horace Greeley had suggested the name "Republican" as an unobjectionable one for the new party; and, within a week after its adoption at Jackson, it became the name of the Free-soilers who marshalled in Wisconsin, Ohio, Illinois, Vermont, and Massachusetts. The anti-Nebraska convention of New York, which reassembled in Auburn on the 27th of September, 1854, also adopted the name, calling its executive committee "the Republican state committee." It was not a new name in the Empire State. Voters in middle life had all been Republicans in their early years; and long after the formation of the National Republicans in 1828, and of the Whig party in 1834, the designation had been used with approval by the Regency. In 1846, Silas Wright spoke of belonging to "the Republican party;" and, in 1848, Horace Greeley suggested "Taylor Republicans" as a substitute for Whigs. But for twenty years the name had practically fallen into disuse, and old questions associated with it had died out of popular memory.

After full conferences between the Whig and Republican state committees, calls were issued for two state conventions to meet at Syracuse on September 26. This meant an opportunity for the formal union of all anti-slavery voters. Of the two hundred and fifty-six delegates allotted to the Republican convention, over two hundred assembled, with Reuben E. Fenton as their presiding officer. Fenton, then

thirty-six years old, was serving his first term in Congress. He was a man of marked intellectual vigour, unquestioned courage, and quiet courtesy, whose ability to control men was to give him, within a few years, something of the influence possessed by Thurlow Weed as a managing politician, with this difference, perhaps, that Fenton trusted more to the prevalence of ideas for which he stood. He kept step with progress. His reason for being a Barnburner, unlike that of John A. Dix,[10] grew out of an intense hatred of slavery, and after the historic break in 1847, he never again, with full-heartedness, co-operated with the Democratic party. Fenton studied law, and, for a time, practised at the bar, but if the dream and highest ambition of his youth were success in the profession, his natural love for trade and politics quickly gained the ascendant. It is doubtful if he would have become a leading lawyer even in his own vicinage, for he showed little real capacity for public speaking. Indeed, he was rather a dull talker. The *Globe*, during his ten years in Congress, rarely reveals him as doing more than making or briefly sustaining a motion, and, although these frequently occurred at the most exciting moments of partisan discussion, showing that he was carefully watching, if not fearlessly directing affairs, it is evident that for the hard blows in debate he relied as much as Weed did upon the readiness of other speakers.

The Whigs, who had represented only a meagre minority of the voters of the State since the Know-Nothing defection, now responded to the call with a full quota of delegates, and elected John A. King president. King was nearly double the age of Fenton. He had been a lieutenant of cavalry in the War of 1812 and an opponent of DeWitt Clinton in the early

[10] "He never became unduly excited about slavery. He had no sympathy for the religious or sentimental side of abolitionism, nor was he moved by the words of the philanthropists, preachers, or poets by whom the agitation was set ablaze and persistently fanned. He probably regarded it as an evil of less magnitude than several others that threatened the country."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, p. 338.

twenties. The two men presented a broad contrast, yet King represented the traditions of the past along the same lines that Fenton represented the hopes of the future. One looked his full age, the other appeared younger than he was, but both were serious. Whatever their aspirations, they existed without rivalry or ill-feeling, the desire for the success of their principles alone animating leaders and followers.

Each convention organised separately, and, after adopting platforms and dividing their tickets equally between men of Whig and Democratic antecedents, conference committees of sixteen were appointed, which reported that the two bodies should appoint committees of sixteen on resolutions and of thirty-two on nominations. These committees having quickly agreed to what had already been done, the Whigs marched in a body to the hall of the Republican convention, the delegates rising and greeting them with cheers and shouts of welcome as they took the seats reserved for them in the centre of the room.

The occasion was one of profound rejoicing. The great coalition which was to stand so strong and to work such wonders during the next half-century doubtless had a period of feebleness in the first months of its existence; but never in its history has it had stronger or more influential men in its ranks, or abler and more determined leaders to direct its course. Horace Greeley reported its platform, demanding that Congress expressly prohibit slavery in the territories, and condemning the doctrines and methods of the Know-Nothings; John A. King, Edwin D. Morgan, and Reuben E. Fenton, destined to lead it to victory as its candidate for governor, sat upon the stage; Henry J. Raymond occupied a delegate's seat; and, back of the scenes, stood the great manager, Thurlow Weed, who had conferred with the Free-soil leaders, and anticipated and arranged every detail. Present in spirit, though absent in body, was William H. Seward, who, within a few weeks, put himself squarely at the head of the new organisation in a speech that was read by more than half a million voters.

After the enthusiasm had subsided the two chairmen, John A. King and Reuben E. Fenton, standing side by side, called the joint convention to order. This was the signal for more cheering. One delegate declared that not being quite sure which convention he ought to attend, he had applied to Seward who wrote him it didn't make any difference. "You will go in by two doors, but you will all come out through one." Then everything went by acclamation. Speaker Littlejohn of the Assembly moved that the two conventions ratify the platforms passed by each convention; Elbridge G. Spaulding moved that the presidents of the two conventions appoint a state central committee; and John A. King moved that the names of the candidates, at the head of whom was Preston King for secretary of state, be given to the people of the State as the "Republican Ticket." Only when an effort was made to procure the indorsement of liquor prohibition did the convention show its teeth. The invitation, it was argued, included all men who were disposed to unite in resisting the aggressions and the diffusion of slavery, and a majority, by a ringing vote, declared it bad faith to insist upon a matter for which the convention was not called and upon which it was not unanimous.

The Know-Nothing state convention met at Auburn on September 26. It was no longer a secret society. The terrors surrounding its mysterious machinery had vanished with the exposure of its secrets and the exploiting of its methods. It was now holding open political conventions and adopting political platforms under the title of the American party; and, as in other political organisations, the slavery question provoked hot controversies and led to serious breaks in its ranks. At its national council, held at Philadelphia in the preceding June, the New York delegation, controlled by the Silver-Gray faction which forced Daniel Ullman's nomination for governor in 1854, had joined the Southern delegates in carrying a pro-slavery resolution abandoning further efforts to restore the Missouri Compromise. In this action the anti-slavery members of other Northern States, led with

great ability and courage by Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, refused to acquiesce, preferring to abandon the Order rather than sacrifice their principles. The contest in New York was renewed at the state council, held at Binghamton on August 28; and, after a bitter session, a majority resolved that slavery should derive no extension from the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. The convention at Auburn now took similar ground. It was not a great victory for the anti-slavery wing of the party; but it disproved the assurances of their delegates that the Americans of New York would uphold the pro-slavery action at Philadelphia, while the fervent heat of the conflict melted the zeal of thousands of anti-Nebraska Know-Nothings, who soon found their way into the Republican party.

But the main body of the Americans, crushed as were its hopes of national unity, was still powerful. It put a ticket into the field, headed by Joel T. Headley for secretary of state, and greatly strengthened by George F. Comstock of Syracuse for judge of the Court of Appeals. Headley was a popular and prolific writer. He had been educated for the ministry at Union College and Auburn Theological Seminary, but his pen paid better than the pulpit, and he soon settled down into a writer of melodramatic biography, of which *Napoleon and His Marshals* attained, perhaps, the greatest popularity. Possibly little interest now clings to his books, which ordinarily rest on the high shelf with Abbott's *History of Napoleon;* but, in their day, it was far pleasanter to read the entertaining and dramatic pages of Headley, with their impassioned, stirring pictures of war and heroism, than the tame, tedious biographies that then filled the libraries. Headley's *History of the War of 1812* immediately preceded his entrance to the Assembly in 1854, where his cleverness attracted the attention of his party and led to his selection for secretary of state. George F. Comstock, now in his forty-first year, had already won an enviable reputation at the Onondaga bar. Like Headley he was a graduate of Union College. In 1847, Governor Young had appointed him the first

reporter for the Court of Appeals, and five years later President Fillmore made him solicitor of the Treasury Department. He belonged to the Hards, but he sympathised with the tenets of the young American party.

There were other parties in the field. The Free Democracy met in convention on August 7, and the Liberty party, assembling at Utica on September 12, nominated Frederick Douglass of Monroe, then a young coloured man of thirty-eight, for secretary of state, and Lewis Tappan of New York for comptroller. Douglass' life had been full of romance. Neither his white father nor coloured mother appears to have had any idea of the prodigy they brought into the world; but it is certain his Maryland master discovered in the little slave boy the great talents that a hard life in Baltimore could not suppress. Douglass secretly began teaching himself to read and write before he was ten years of age, and three years after his escape from slavery at the age of twenty-one, he completely captured an audience at an anti-slavery convention in Nantucket by his brilliant speaking. This gave him employment as an agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, and four years later brought him crowded audiences in England, Scotland, and Ireland.

Frederick Douglass was a favourite everywhere. He had wit and humour, and spoke with the refinement of a cultivated scholar. He did not become a narrow and monotonous agitator. The variety of his intellectual sympathies, controlled by the constancy of a high moral impulse, wholly exempted him from the rashness of a conceited zealot; and, though often brilliant and at times rhetorical, his style was quiet and persuasive, reaching the reason as easily as the emotions. Coming as he did, out of slavery, at a time when the anti-slavery sentiment was beginning to be aggressive and popular in New England and other free States, Douglass seemed to be the Moses of his race as much as Booker T. Washington in these later years. Englishmen raised one hundred and fifty pounds and bought his freedom in 1846. The next year, as a Garrisonian disunionist, he began the

publication of a weekly journal in Rochester; but he soon renounced disunionism, maintaining that slavery was illegal and unconstitutional. In the year the Liberty party nominated him for secretary of state, his publishers sold eighteen thousand copies of his autobiography, entitled *My Bondage and My Freedom.*

Before the campaign was far advanced it became evident that the Republican party was not drawing all the anti-slavery elements to which it was thought to be entitled; and, on the 12th of October, Seward made a speech in Albany, answering the question, "Shall we form a new party?" The hall was little more than two-thirds filled, and an absence of joyous enthusiasm characterised the meeting. Earnest men sat with serious faces, thinking of party ties severed and the work of a lifetime apparently snuffed out, with deep forebodings for the future of the new organisation. This was a time to appeal to reason—not to the emotions, and Seward met it squarely with a storehouse of arguments. He sketched the history of slavery's growth as a political power; he explained that slave-holders were a privileged class, getting the better of the North in appropriations and by the tariff. "Protection is denied to your wool," he said, "while it is freely given to their sugar." Then he pointed out how slavery had grasped the territories as each one presented itself for admission into the Union—Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama, almost at the very outset of the national career; then Florida, when acquired from Spain; then as much of the Louisiana Purchase as possible; then Texas and the territory acquired from Mexico—all the while deluding the North with the specious pretence that each successive seizure of free soil was a "compromise" and a final settlement of the slavery question. This opened the way to the matter in hand—how to meet slavery's aggressiveness. "Shall we take the American party?" he asked. "It stifles its voice, and suppresses your own free speech, lest it may be overheard beyond the Potomac. In the slave-holding States it justifies all wrongs committed against you. Shall we unite

ourselves to the Democratic party? If so, to which faction? The Hards who are so stern in defending the aggressions, and in rebuking the Administration through whose agency they are committed? or the Softs who protest against the aggressions, while they sustain and invigorate the Administration? What is it but the same party which has led in the commission of all those aggressions, and claims exclusively the political benefits? Shall we report ourselves to the Whig party? Where is it? It was a strong and vigorous party, honourable for energy, noble achievement, and still more noble enterprises. It was moved by panics and fears to emulate the Democratic party in its practised subserviency; and it yielded in spite of your remonstrances, and of mine, and now there is neither Whig party nor Whig south of the Potomac. Let, then, the Whig party pass. It committed a grievous fault, and grievously hath it answered it. Let it march off the field, therefore, with all the honours. . . . The Republican organisation has laid a new, sound, and liberal platform. Its principles are equal and exact justice; its speech open, decided, and frank. Its banner is untorn in former battles, and unsullied by past errors. That is the party for us."[11]

When the meeting ended the people went out satisfied. The smallness of the audience had been forgotten in the clear, homely arguments, and in the glow kindled in every heart; nor did they know that the speech spoken in their hearing would be read and pondered by half a million voters within a month. Richard H. Dana pronounced it "the keynote of the new party."[12] But though sown in fruitful soil, insufficient time was to elapse before election for such arguments to root and blossom; and when the votes were counted in November, the Know-Nothings had polled 146,001, the Republicans 135,962, the Softs 90,518, and the Hards 58,394. Samuel L. Selden, the candidate of the Hards and Softs for judge of

[11] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 256. For full speech, see *Seward's Works*, Vol. 4, p. 225.

[12] *Diary of R. H. Dana*, C. F. Adams, *Life of Dana*, Vol. 1, p. 348.

the Court of Appeals, had 149,702. George F. Comstock was also declared elected, having received 141,094, or nearly 5000 less than Headley for secretary of state. In the Assembly the Republicans numbered 44, the Know-Nothings 39, and the Hards and Softs 45.

"The events of the election," wrote Seward, "show that the Silver-Grays have been successful in a new and attractive form, so as to divide a majority of the people in the cities and towns from the great question of the day. That is all. The rural districts still remain substantially sound. A year is necessary to let the cheat wear off."[13] To a friend who was greatly alarmed at the success of the Know-Nothings, he wrote: "There is just so much gas in any ascending balloon. Before the balloon is down, the gas must escape. But the balloon is always sure not only to come down, but to come down *very quick*. The heart of the country is fixed on higher and nobler things. Do not distrust it."[14]

After the election, some people held the opinion that the prospect of a united anti-slavery party was not so favourable as it had been at the close of 1854; and men were inclined then, as some historians are now, to criticise Seward for not forcing the formation of the Republican party in New York in 1854 and putting himself at its head by making speeches in New England and the West as well as in New York. "Had Seward sunk the politician in the statesman," says Rhodes; "had he vigorously asserted that every cause must be subordinate to Union under the banner of opposition to the extension of slavery—the close of the year would have seen a triumphant Republican party in every Northern State but California, and Seward its acknowledged leader. It was the tide in Seward's affairs, but he did not take it at the flood."[15]

[13] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 258.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

[15] James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 69. See also p. 68. "Seward," says the historian, "had the position, the ability and the character necessary for the leadership of a new party. He was the idol of the anti-slavery Whigs. . . . Perhaps his sympathies were heartily enlisted in the movement for a new

Looking back into the fifties from the viewpoint of the present, this suggestion of the distinguished historian seems plausible. Undoubtedly Thurlow Weed's judgment controlled in 1854, and back of it was thirty years of successful leadership, based upon the sagacity of a statesman as well as the skill of a clever politician. It was inevitable that Weed should be a Republican. He had opposed slavery before he was of age. The annexation of Texas met his strenuous resistance, the Wilmot Proviso had his active approval, and he assailed the fugitive slave law and the Nebraska Act with unsparing bitterness. With a singleness of purpose, not excelled by Seward or Sumner, his heart quickly responded to every movement which should limit, and, if possible, abolish slavery; but, in his wisdom, with Know-Nothings recruiting members from the anti-slavery ranks, and the Whig party confident of success because of a divided Democracy, he did not see his way safely to organise the Republican party in New York in 1854. It is possible his desire to re-elect Seward to the United States Senate may have increased his caution. Seward's re-election was just then a very important factor in the successful coalition of the anti-slavery elements of the Empire State. Besides, Weed knew very well that defeat would put the work of coalition into unfriendly hands, and it might be disastrous if a hostile majority were allowed to deal with it according to their own designs and their own

party and he was held back by Thurlow Weed. Perhaps he would have felt less trammelled had not his senatorship been at stake in the fall election. The fact is, however, that the Republican movement in the West and New England received no word of encouragement from him. He did not make a speech, even in the State of New York, during the campaign. His care and attention were engrossed in seeing that members of the Legislature were elected who would vote for him for senator." On July 27, 1854, the New York *Independent* asked: "Shall we have a new party? The leaders for such a party do not appear. Seward adheres to the Whig party." In the New York *Tribune* of November 9, Greeley asserted that "the man who should have impelled and guided the general uprising of the free States is W. H. Seward."

class interests. Nevertheless, his delay in organising and Seward's failure to lead the new party in 1854, left an indelible impression to their injury in the West, if not in New York and New England, "for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRST REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR

1856

Kansas troubles did not subside after the election. The Pierce administration found itself harassed by the most formidable opposition it had yet encountered. Reeder was out of the way for the moment; but the Northern settlers, by planning a flank movement which included the organisation of a state government and an appeal to Congress for admission to the Union, proved themselves an enemy much more pertinacious and ingenious than the removed Governor. To aid them in their endeavour, friends sent a supply of Sharpe's rifles, marked "books." Accordingly, on the 9th of October, 1855, delegates were elected to a convention which met at Topeka on the 23d of the same month and framed a Constitution prohibiting slavery and providing for its submission to the people.

This practically established a second government. Governor Shannon, the successor of Reeder, recognised the action of the fraudulently chosen territorial Legislature, while the free-state settlers, with headquarters at Lawrence, repudiated its laws and resisted their enforcement. Things could not long remain in this unhappy condition, and when, at last, a free-state man was killed it amounted to a declaration of hostilities. Immediately, the people of Lawrence threw up earthworks; the Governor called out the militia; and the Missourians again crossed the border. By the 1st of December a couple of regiments were encamped in the vicinity of Lawrence, behind whose fortifications calmly rested six hundred men, half of them armed with Sharpe's rifles. A howitzer added to their confidence. Finally, the border ruffians,

who had heard of the breech-loading rifles and learned of the character of the men behind them, after dallying for several weeks, recrossed the river and permitted the settlers to ratify the new Constitution. In January, 1856, a governor and legislature were chosen, and, in February, the Legislature, meeting at Topeka, memorialised Congress, asking that Kansas be admitted into the Union. Thereupon, Senator Douglas reported a bill providing that whenever the people of Kansas numbered 93,420 inhabitants they might organise a State. Instantly, Senator Seward offered a substitute, providing for its immediate admission with the Topeka Constitution.

The events leading up to this parliamentary situation had been noisy and murderous, rekindling a spirit of indignation in the South as well as in the North, which brought out fiery appeals from the press. The Georgia Legislature proposed to appropriate sixty thousand dollars to aid emigration to Kansas. A chivalrous colonel of Alabama who issued an appeal for three hundred men willing to fight for the cause of the South, began his march from Montgomery with two hundred, having first received a blessing from a Methodist minister and a Bible from a divine of the Baptist church. One young lady of South Carolina set the example of selling her jewelry to equip men with rifles. The same spirit manifested itself in the North. Public meetings encouraged armed emigration. "The duty of the people of the free States," said the *Tribune*, "is to send more true men, more Sharpe's rifles, and more howitzers to Kansas."[1] William Cullen Bryant wrote his brother that "by the 1st of May there will be several thousand more free-state settlers in Kansas. Of course they will go well armed."[2] Henry Ward Beecher, happening to be present at a meeting in which an orthodox deacon who had enlisted seventy-nine emigrants asked for more rifles, declared that a Sharpe's rifle was a greater moral agency than the Bible, and that if half the guns needed were pledged on the spot Plymouth Church would furnish the rest.[3] Thus,

[1] New York *Weekly Tribune*, February 2, 1856.

[2] Parke Godwin, *Life of Bryant*, Vol. 2, p. 88.

[3] New York *Independent*, March 26, 1856.

the equipment of Northern emigrants to Kansas became known as "Beecher's Bibles."[4] Henry J. Raymond said that "the question of slavery domination must be fought out on the plains of Kansas."[5] To add to Northern bitterness, President Pierce, in a special message to the United State Senate, condemned the emigrant aid societies, threatening to call out the army, and approving the acts of the pro-slavery Legislature.

In the midst of this excitement, Senator Douglas began the debate on his Kansas bill which was destined to become more historic than the outrages of the border ruffians themselves. Douglas upheld the acts of the territorial Legislature as the work of law and order, denouncing the Northern emigrants as daring and defiant revolutionists, and charging that "the whole responsibility for all the disturbance rested upon the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Company and its affiliated societies."[6] Horace Greeley admitted the force and power of Douglas' argument, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, the gifted author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* was so profoundly impressed with the matchless orator that she thought it "a merciful providence that with all his alertness and adroitness, all his quick-sighted keenness, Douglas is not witty—that might have made him too irresistible a demagogue for the liberties of our laughter-loving people, to whose weakness he is altogether too well adapted now."[7] The friends of a free Kansas appreciated the superiority in debate of the Illinois statesman, whose arguments now called out half a dozen replies from as many Republican senators. It afforded a fine opportunity to define and shape the principles of the new party, and each senator attracted wide attention. But the speech of Seward, who took the floor on the 9th of April in favour of the immediate admission of Kansas as a State, seems to have impressed the country as far the ablest. He

[4] New York *Independent*, February 7, 1856.
[5] New York *Times*, February 1, 1856.
[6] Report of Committee on Territories, U. S. Senate, March 12, 1856.
[7] New York *Independent*, May 1, 1856, Letters from Washington.

sketched the history of the Kansas territory; reviewed the sacrifices of its people; analysed and refuted each argument in support of the President's policy; and defended the settlers in maintaining their struggle for freedom. "Greeley expressed the opinion of the country and the judgment of the historian," says Rhodes, "when he wrote to his journal that Seward's speech was 'the great argument' and stood 'unsurpassed in its political philosophy.'"[8] The *Times* pronounced it "the ablest of all his speeches."[9] On the day of its publication the *Weekly Tribune* sent out 162,000 copies. Seward wrote Weed that "the demand for it exceeds what I have ever known. I am giving copies away by the thousand for distribution in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and other States."[10]

A month later, on the 19th and 20th of May, came the speech of Charles Sumner, entitled "The Crime Against Kansas." Whittier called it "a grand and terrible philippic." Sumner had read it to Senator and Mrs. Seward, who advised the omission of certain personal allusions to Senator Butler;[11] but he delivered it as he wrote it, and two days later the country was startled by Preston S. Brooks' assault. The North received this outrage with horror as the work of the slave power. In public meetings, the people condemned it as a violation of the freedom of speech and a blow at the personal safety of public men having the courage to express their convictions. "The blows that fell on the head of the Senator from Massachusetts," said Seward, "have done more for the cause of human freedom in Kansas and in the territories of the United States than all the eloquence which has resounded in these halls since the days of Rufus King and John Quincy Adams."[12] The events surrounding the assault—Brooks' resignation, his unanimous re-election, his challenge to Burlingame, and his refusal to fight in Canada—all tended

[8] James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 130.
[9] New York *Times*, April 9, 1856.
[10] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 270.
[11] Statement of William H. Seward, Jr., to the Author.
[12] This speech was made on June 24, 1856.

to intensify Northern feeling. Close upon the heels of this excitement came news from Kansas of the burning of Lawrence, the destruction of Osawatomie, the sacking of free-state printing offices, and the murder of Northern immigrants. To complete the list of crimes against free speech and freedom, the commander of a force of United States troops dispersed the Topeka Legislature at the point of the bayonet.

This was the condition of affairs when the two great political parties of the country assembled in national convention in June, 1856, to select candidates for President and Vice President. At their state convention, in January, to select delegates-at-large to Cincinnati, the Softs had put themselves squarely in accord with the pro-slavery wing of their party. They commended the administration of Pierce, approved the Nebraska Act, and denounced as "treasonable" the Kansas policy of the Republican party. This was a wide departure from their position of August, 1855, which had practically reaffirmed the principles of the Wilmot Proviso; but the trend of public events compelled them either to renounce all anti-slavery leanings or abandon their party. Their surrender, however, did not turn their reception at Cincinnati into the welcome of prodigals. The committee on credentials kept them waiting at the door for two days, and when they were finally admitted they were compelled to enter on an equality with the Hards. Horatio Seymour pleaded for representation in proportion to the votes cast, which would have given the Softs three-fifths of the delegation, but the convention thought them entitled to no advantages because of their "abolition principles," and even refused a request for additional seats from which their colleagues might witness the proceedings. To complete their humiliation the convention required them formally to deny the right of Congress or of the people of a territory to prohibit slavery in any territory of the United States. It was a bitter dose. The Democracy of the Empire State had been accustomed to control conventions—not to serve them. For twenty years they had

come with candidates for the Presidency, and if none of their statesmen had been nominated since 1836 they were recognised as resolute men, bold in diplomacy, ready for any emergency, and as formidable to their enemies as they were dear to their friends. For nearly three decades a New Yorker had been in the Cabinet of every administration. But the glory of former days had now departed. For twelve years the party had been divided and weakened, until, at last, it had neither presidential candidate to offer nor cabinet position to expect.

The leading candidates at Cincinnati were Franklin Pierce, Stephen A. Douglas, and James Buchanan. Northern delegates had been inclined to support Pierce or Douglas; but since the assault upon Sumner and the destruction of Lawrence, the conciliation of the North by the nomination of a candidate who had not participated in the events of the past three years seemed the wisest and safest policy. Buchanan had been minister to England since the birth of the Pierce administration; and the fact that he hailed from Pennsylvania, a very important State in the election, strengthened his availability. The Softs recognised the wisdom of this philosophy, but, under the leadership of Marcy, who had given them the federal patronage for three years, they voted for the President, with the hope that his supporters might ultimately unite with those of Douglas. The Hards, on the contrary, supported Buchanan. They had little use for Pierce, who had persecuted them.

On the first ballot Buchanan had 135 votes, Pierce 122, Douglas 33, and Cass 5, with 197 necessary to a choice. This made Buchanan's success probable if his forces stood firm; and as other ballots brought him additional votes at the expense of Pierce, his nomination seemed certain. The Softs, however, continued with Pierce until his withdrawal on the fourteenth ballot; then, putting aside an opportunity to support the winning candidate, they turned to Douglas. But to their great surprise, Douglas withdrew at the end of the next ballot, leaving the field to Buchanan. This placed the Softs,

who now joined the Hards because there was no longer any way of keeping apart, in an awkward position. Seymour, however, gracefully accepted the situation, declaring that, although the Softs came into the convention under many disadvantages, they desired to do all in their power to harmonise the vote of the convention and to promote the discontinuance of factional differences in the great State of New York. Greene C. Bronson, who smiled derisively as he heard this deathbed repentance, did not know how soon Horatio Seymour was destined again to command the party.

The Republican national convention convened at Philadelphia on the 17th of June. Recent events had encouraged Republicans with the hope of ultimate victory. Nathaniel P. Banks' election as speaker of the national House of Representatives on the one hundred and thirty-seventh ballot, after a fierce contest of two months, was a great triumph; interest in the Pittsburg convention on the 22d of February had surpassed expectations; and the troubles of "bleeding Kansas," which seemed to culminate in the assault upon Sumner and the destruction of Lawrence, had kept the free States in a condition of profound excitement. Such brutal outrages, it was thought, would certainly discredit any party that approved the policy leading to them. Sustained by this hope the convention, in its platform, arraigned the Administration for the conduct of affairs; demanded the immediate admission of Kansas into the Union under the Topeka Constitution; and resolved, amidst the greatest enthusiasm, that "it is both the right and duty of Congress to prohibit in the territories those twin relics of barbarism, polygamy and slavery."

The selection of a presidential candidate gave the delegates more trouble. They wanted an available man who could carry Pennsylvania; and between the supporters of John C. Fremont and the forces of John McLean, for twenty-six years a member of the United States Supreme Court, the canvass became earnest and exciting. Finally, on an informal ballot, Fremont secured 359 of the 555 votes in the con-

vention. William L. Dayton of New Jersey was then nominated for Vice President over Abraham Lincoln, who received 110 votes.

William H. Seward was the logical candidate for President. He represented Republican principles and aims more fully than any man in the country, but Thurlow Weed, looking into the future through the eyes of a practical politician, disbelieved in Republican success. He argued that, although Republicans were sure of 114 electoral votes, it was essential to carry Pennsylvania to secure the additional 35, and that Pennsylvania could not be carried. This belief was strengthened after the nomination of Buchanan, who pledged himself to give fair play to Kansas, which many understood to mean a free State. Under these conditions Weed advised Seward not to become a candidate, on the theory that defeat in 1856 would sacrifice his chances in 1860.

Seward, as usual, acquiesced in Weed's judgment. "I once heard Seward declare," wrote Gideon Welles, "that 'Seward is Weed and Weed is Seward. What I do, Weed approves. What he says, I indorse. We are one.' "[13] On this occasion, however, it is certain Seward accepted Weed's judgment with much reluctance. His heart was set upon the nomination, and his letters reveal disappointment and even disgust at the arrangement. "It is a delicate thing," he wrote, on the 27th of April, "to go through the present ordeal, but I am endeavouring to do so without giving any one just cause to complain of indifference on my part to the success of the cause. I have shut out the subject itself from conversation and correspondence, and, so far as possible, from my thoughts."[14] But he could not close his ears. "From all I hear 'availability' is to be indulged next week and my own friends are

[13] Gideon Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, p. 23. "I am sorry to hear the remark," said the late Chief Justice Chase, "for while I would strain a point to oblige Mr. Seward, I feel under no obligations to do anything for the special benefit of Mr. Weed. The two are not and never can be one to me."—*Ibid.*, p. 23.

[14] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 270.

to make the sacrifice," he wrote his wife, on June 11, six days before the convention opened. "Be it so; I shall submit with better grace than others would."[15] Two days later he said: "It tries my patience to hear what is said and to act as if I assented, under expectation of personal benefits, present and prospective."[16]

What especially gravelled Seward was the action of his opponents. "The understanding all around me is," he wrote his wife, on June 14, "that Greeley has struck hands with enemies of mine and sacrificed me for the good of the cause, to be obtained by the nomination of a more available candidate, and that Weed has concurred in demanding my acquiescence."[17] Seward suspected the truth of this "understanding" as to Greeley, but it is doubtful if he then believed Weed had betrayed him. Perhaps this thought came later after he heard of Fremont's astonishing vote and learned that the newspapers were again nominating the Path-finder for a standard-bearer in 1860. "Seward more than hinted to confidential friends," wrote Henry B. Stanton, "that Weed betrayed him for Fremont." Then Stanton tells the story of Weed and Seward riding up Broadway, and how, when passing the bronze statue of Lincoln in Union Square, Seward said, "Weed, if you had been faithful to me, I should have been there instead of Lincoln." "Seward," replied Weed, "is it not better to be alive in a carriage with me than to be dead and set up in bronze?"[18]

How much Weed's advice to Seward was influenced by the arguments of opponents nowhere appears, but the disappointment of Democrats and conservative Americans upon the announcement of Seward's withdrawal proves that these objections were serious. His views were regarded as too extreme for a popular candidate. It was deemed advisable not to put in issue either the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, or the repeal of the fugitive slave law, and Seward's

[15] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 277.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 277.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 277.
[18] H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 194.

pronounced attitude on these questions, it was asserted, would involve them in the campaign regardless of the silence of the platform. It was argued, also, that although the Whigs were numerically the largest portion of the Republican party, a candidate of Democratic antecedents would be preferable, especially in Pennsylvania, a State, they declared, which Seward could not carry. To all this Greeley undoubtedly assented. The dissolution of the firm of Seward, Weed, and Greeley, announced in Greeley's remarkable letter of November 11, 1854, but not yet made public, had, indeed, taken effect. The result was not so patent, certainly not so vitriolic, as it appeared at Chicago in 1860, but Greeley now began insinuating doubts of Seward's popular strength, exaggerating local prejudices against him, and yielding to objections raised by his avowed opponents. His hostility found no place in the columns of the *Tribune,* but it coloured his conversations and private correspondence. To Richard A. Dana he wrote that Callamer's speech on the Kansas question "is better than Seward's, in my humble judgment;"[19] yet the *Tribune* pronounced Seward's "the great argument" and "unsurpassed in political philosophy." The importance of Pennsylvania became as prominent a factor in the convention of 1856 as it did in that of 1860, and Greeley did not hesitate to affirm Seward's inability to carry it, declaring that such weakness made his nomination fatal to party success.

The opponents of Seward, however, could not have prevented his nomination had he decided to enter the race. He was the unanimous choice of the New York delegation. The mere mention of his name at Philadelphia met with the loudest applause. When Senator Wilson of Massachusetts spoke of him as "the foremost American statesman," the cheers made further speaking impossible for several minutes. He was the idol of the convention as he was the chief figure of his party. John A. King declared that could his name have been presented "it would have received the universal ap-

[19] Letters of April 7, 1856.

probation of the convention." Robert Emmet, the son of the distinguished Thomas Addis Emmet, and the temporary chairman of the convention, made a similar statement. Even Thurlow Weed found it difficult to prevail upon his friends to bide their time until the next national convention. "Earnest friends refused to forego my nomination," Seward wrote his wife on June 17, the day the convention opened, "without my own authority."[20]

When the several state conventions convened at Syracuse each party sought its strongest man for governor. The Hards and the Softs were first in the field, meeting in separate conventions on July 30. After inviting each other to join in a union meeting they reassembled as one body, pledged to support the Cincinnati platform. It was not an occasion for cheers. Consolidation was the only alternative, with chances that the ultra pro-slavery platform meant larger losses if not certain defeat. In this crisis Horatio Seymour assumed the leadership that had been his in 1852, and that was not to be laid down for more than a decade. Seymour was now in his prime—still under fifty years of age. He had become a leader of energy and courage; and, although destined for many years to lead a divided and often a defeated organisation, he was ever after recognised as the most gifted and notable member of his party. He was a typical Northern Democrat. He had the virtues and foibles that belonged to that character in his generation, the last of whom have now passed from the stage of public action.

The effort to secure a Democratic nominee for governor required four ballots. Addison Gardiner, David L. Seymour, Fernando Wood, and Amasa J. Parker were the leading candidates. David Seymour had been a steady supporter of the Hards. He belonged to the O'Conor type of conservatives, rugged and stalwart, who seemed unmindful of the changing conditions in the political growth of the country. At Cincinnati, he opposed the admission of the Softs as an unjust and utterly irrational disqualification of the Hards, who, he

[20] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 278.

said, had always stood firmly by party platforms and party nominations regardless of personal convictions. Fernando Wood belonged to a different type.[21] He had already developed those regrettable qualities which gave him a most unsavoury reputation as mayor of New York; but of the dangerous qualities that lay beneath the winning surface of his gracious manner, men as yet knew nothing. Just now his gubernatorial ambition, fed by dishonourable methods, found support in a great host of noisy henchmen who demanded his nomination. Addison Gardiner was the choice of the Softs. Gardiner had been elected lieutenant-governor on the ticket with Silas Wright in 1844, and later became an original member of the Court of Appeals, from which he retired in 1855. He was a serious, simple-hearted, wise man, well fitted for governor. But Horatio Seymour made up his mind that Parker, although far below Gardiner and David L. Seymour in number of votes, would better unite the convention, and upon Gardiner's withdrawal Parker immediately received the nomination.

Amasa J. Parker was then forty-nine years of age, an eminent, successful lawyer. Before his thirty-second birthday he had served Delaware County as surrogate, district attorney, assemblyman, and congressman. Later, he became a judge of the Supreme Court and removed to Albany, where

[21] Fernando Wood was a Quaker and a Philadelphian by birth. In early youth he became a cigarmaker, then a tobacco dealer, and later a grocer. At Harrisburg, his first introduction to politics resulted in a fist-fight with a state senator who was still on the floor when Wood left the bar-room. Then he went to New York, and, in 1840, was elected to Congress at the age of twenty-eight. Wood had a fascinating personality. He was tall and shapely, his handsome features and keen blue eyes were made the more attractive by an abundance of light hair which fell carelessly over a high, broad forehead. But, as a politician, he was as false as his capacity would allow him to be, having no hesitation, either from principle or fear, to say or do anything that served his purpose. He has been called the successor of Aaron Burr and the predecessor of William M. Tweed. In 1858, he organised Mozart Hall, a Democratic society opposed to Tammany.

he resided for forty-six years, until his death in 1890. Parker was a New England Puritan, who had been unusually well raised. He passed from the study of his father, a Congregational clergyman, to the senior class at Union College, graduating at eighteen; and from his uncle's law library to the surrogate's office. All his early years had been a training for public life. He had associated with scholars and thinkers, and in the estimation of his contemporaries there were few stronger or clearer intellects in the State. But his later political career was a disappointment. His party began nominating him for governor after it had fallen into the unfortunate habit of being beaten, and, although he twice ran ahead of his ticket, the anti-slavery sentiment that dominated New York after 1854 kept him out of the executive chair.

The Republican state convention assembled at Syracuse on the 17th of September. A feeling existed that the election this year would extract the people from the mire of Know-Nothingism, giving the State its first Republican governor; and confidence of success, mingled with an unusual desire to make no mistake, characterised the selection of a nominee for chief executive. Myron H. Clark, a man of the people, had made a good governor, but he was too heavily weighted with prohibition to suit the older public men, who did not take kindly to him. They turned to Moses H. Grinnell, whose pre-eminence as a large-hearted, public-spirited merchant always kept him in sight. Grinnell was now fifty-three years of age. His broad, handsome face showed an absence of bigotry and intolerance, while the motives that controlled his life were public and patriotic, not personal. Probably no man in New York City, since the time John Jay left it, had ever had more admirers. He was a favourite of Daniel Webster, who appointed Washington Irving minister to Spain upon his request. This interest in the famous author, as well as his recent promotion of Dr. Kane's expedition to the Arctic seas in search of Sir John Franklin, indicated the broad philanthropy that governed his well-ordered life.

But he declined to accept office. The distinguished house that had borne his name for twenty-seven years, decided that its senior member could not be spared, even temporarily, to become governor of the State, and so Grinnell's official life was limited to a single term in Congress, although his public life may be said to have spanned nearly two-thirds of his more than three score years and ten.

Grinnell's decision seemed to leave an open field, and upon the first ballot John A. King received 91 votes, James S. Wadsworth 72, Simeon Draper 23, Myron H. Clark 22, and Ira Harris 22. Thurlow Weed and the wheel horses of Whig descent, however, preferring that the young party have a governor of their own antecedents, familiar with political difficulties and guided by firmness and wisdom, had secretly determined upon King. But Wadsworth, although he quickly felt the influence of their decision, declined to withdraw. Wadsworth was a born fighter. In the Free-soil secession of 1847, he proclaimed uncompromising hostility to the extension of slavery, and he never changed his position until death ended his gallant and noble service in the Civil War.

Wadsworth descended from a notable family. His father, James Wadsworth, a graduate of Yale, leaving his Connecticut home in young manhood, bought of the Dutch and of the Six Nations twenty thousand acres in the Genesee Valley, and became one of the earliest settlers and wealthiest men in Western New York. He was, also, the most public-spirited citizen. He believed in normal schools and in district school libraries, and he may properly be called one of the founders of the educational system of the State. But he never cared for political office. It was said of him that his refusal to accept public place was as inflexible as his determination to fight Oliver Kane, a well-known merchant of New York City, after trouble had occurred at the card table. The story, told at the time, was that the two, after separating in anger, met before sunrise the next morning, without seconds or surgeons, under a tall pine tree on a bluff, and after politely measuring the distance and taking their places, continued

shooting at each other until Kane, slightly wounded, declared he had enough.[22]

James S. Wadsworth discovered none of his father's aversion to holding office. He, also, graduated at Yale and studied law in the office of Daniel Webster, but he preferred politics and agriculture to the troubles of clients, and, although never successful in getting office, all admitted his fitness for it. He was brave, far-sighted, and formed to please. He had a handsome face and stately presence. Many people who never saw him were strongly attracted to him by sympathy of political opinions and by gratitude for important services rendered the country. There was to come a time, in 1862, when these radical friends, looking upon him as the Lord's Anointed, and indifferent to the wishes of Thurlow Weed and the more conservative leaders, forced his nomination for governor by acclamation; but, in 1856, John A. King had the weightiest influence, and, on the second ballot, he took the strength of Draper, Clark, and Harris, receiving 158 votes to 73 for Wadsworth. It was not soon forgotten, however, that in the memorable stampede for King, Wadsworth more than held his own.

John Alsop King was the eldest son of Rufus King. While the father was minister to the court of St. James, the son attended the famous school at Harrow, had as classmates Lord Byron and Sir Robert Peel, and went the usual rounds of continental travel. For nearly four decades he had been conspicuous in public life as assemblyman, senator, congressman, and in the diplomatic service. Starting as a Federalist and an early advocate of anti-slavery sentiments, he had been an Anti-Mason, a National Republican, and a Whig. Only when he acted with Martin Van Buren against DeWitt Clinton did he flicker in his political consistency. Although now sixty-eight years old, he was still rugged—a man of vigorous sense and great public spirit. His congressional experience came when the hosts of slavery and freedom were marshalling for the great contest for the territory between

[22] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 1, p. 153.

the Mississippi and the Pacific, and at the side of Preston King he resisted Clay's compromise measures, especially the fugitive slave law, and warmly supported the admission of California as a free State. "I have come to have a great liking for the Kings," wrote Seward, in 1850. "They have withstood the seduction of the seducers, and are like a rock in the defence of the right. They have been tried as through fire."[23] John A. King was not ambitious for public place. He waited to be called to an office, but he did not wait to be called to join a movement which would be helpful to the public. His ear was to the sky rather than to the ground. He believed Ralph Waldo Emerson's saying: "That is the one base thing in the universe, to receive benefits and render none." Like his distinguished father, he was tolerant in dealing with men who differed from him, but he never shrank from the expression of an opinion because it would bring sacrifice or ostracism.

The ticket was strengthened by the nomination of Henry R. Selden of Monroe for lieutenant-governor. Selden belonged to a family that had been prominent for two centuries in the Connecticut Valley. Like his older brother, Samuel L. Selden, who lived at Rochester, he was an able lawyer and a man of great industry. These brothers brought to the service of the people a perfect integrity, coupled with a gracious urbanity that kept them in public life longer than either desired to remain. One was a Republican, the other a Democrat. Samuel became a partner of Addison Gardiner in 1825, and Henry, after studying law with them, opened an office at Clarkson in the western part of the county. In 1851, Henry became reporter for the Court of Appeals, and then lieutenant-governor. Samuel's public service began earlier. He became judge of the Court of Common Pleas in 1831, of the Supreme Court in 1847, and of the Court of Appeals in 1856. When he resigned in 1862, Henry took his place by appointment, and afterward by election. Finally, in 1865, he also resigned. The brothers were much alike in the quality

[23] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 140.

they brought to the public service; and their work, as remarkable for its variety as for its dignity, made Samuel an original promoter of the electric telegraph system and Henry a defender of Susan B. Anthony when arrested on the charge of illegally voting at a presidential election.

The Americans nominated Erastus Brooks for governor. He was a younger brother of James Brooks, who founded the New York *Express* in 1836. The Brookses were born in Maine, and early exhibited the industry and courage characteristic of the sons of the Pine Tree State. At eight years of age, Erastus began work in a grocery store, fitting himself for Brown University at a night school, and, at twenty, he became an editor on his brother's paper. His insistence upon the taxation of property of the Catholic Church, because, being held in the name of the Bishops, it should be included under the laws governing personal holdings in realty, brought him prominently before the Americans, who sent him to the State Senate in 1854. But Brooks' political career, like that of his brother, really began after the Civil War, although his identification with the Know-Nothings marked him as a man of force, capable of making strong friends and acquiring much influence.

The activity of the Americans indicated firm faith in their success. Six months before Brooks' nomination they had named Millard Fillmore for President. At the time, the former President was in Europe. On his return he accepted the compliment and later received the indorsement of the old-line Whigs. Age had not left its impress. Of imposing appearance, he looked like a man formed to rule. The peculiar tenets of the Americans, except as exemplified in the career of their candidate for governor, did not enter into Fillmore's campaign. He rested his hopes upon the conservative elements of all parties who condemned the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and opposed the formation of a party which, he declared, had, for the first time in the history of the Republic, selected candidates for President and Vice President from the free States alone, with the avowed purpose of

electing them by the suffrages of one part of the Union to rule over the other part.

This was also the argument of Buchanan. In his letter of acceptance he sounded the keynote of his party, claiming that it was strictly national, devoted to the Constitution and the Union, and that the Republican party, ignoring the historic warning of Washington, was formed on geographic lines.[24] All this made little impression upon the host of Northern men who exulted in the union of all the anti-slavery elements. But their intense devotion to the positive utterances of their platform took away the sense of humour which often relieves the tension of political activity, and substituted an element of profound seriousness that was plainly visible in speakers and audiences. Seward did not hasten into the campaign. Richard H. Dana wrote, confidentially, that "Seward was awful grouty." It was October 2 when he began speaking. Congress had detained him until August 30, and then his health was so impaired, it was explained, that he needed rest. But other lovers of freedom were deeply stirred. The pulpit became a platform, and the great edi-

[24] Horatio Seymour used the same argument with great effect. "Another tie which has heretofore held our country together has been disbanded, and from its ruins has sprung a political organisation trusting for its success to sectional prejudices. It excludes from its councils the people of nearly one-half of the Union; it seeks a triumph over one-half our country. The battlefields of Yorktown, of Camden, of New Orleans, are unrepresented in their conventions; and no delegates speak for the States where rest the remains of Washington, Jefferson, Marion, Sumter, or Morgan, or of the later hero, Jackson. They cherish more bitter hatred of their own countrymen than they have ever shown towards the enemies of our land. If the language they hold this day had been used eighty years since, we should not have thrown off the British yoke; our national constitution would not have been formed; and if their spirit of hatred continues, our Constitution and Government will cease to exist."—Seymour at Springfield, Mass., July 4, 1856. Cook and Knox, *Public Record of Horatio Seymour*, p. 2.

"John A. Dix supported the Democratic candidates in the canvass of 1856; he did not, however, take an active part in the contest."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, p. 319.

tors spoke as well as wrote. Henry Ward Beecher seemed ubiquitous; Greeley and Raymond made extended tours through the State; Bryant was encouraged to overcome his great timidity before an audience; and Washington Irving declared his intention of voting, if not of speaking, for Fremont.

This campaign also welcomed into political life a young man whose first speech made it plain that a new champion, with bright and well-tempered sword, had taken up the cause of freedom with the courage of the cavalier. George William Curtis was then thirty-two years old. He had already written the Howadji books, which earned him recognition among men of letters, and *Prue and I*, which had secured his fame as an author. In the campaign of 1856, the people for the first time saw and knew this man whose refined rhetoric, characterised by tender and stirring appeal, and guided by principle and conviction, was, thereafter, for nearly forty years, to be heard at its best on one side of every important question that divided American political life. Nathaniel P. Willis, who drove five miles in the evening to hear him deliver a "stump speech," thought Curtis would be "too handsome and too well dressed" for a political orator; but when he heard him unfold his logical argument step by step, occasionally bursting into a strain of inspiring eloquence that foreshadowed the more studied work of his riper years, it taught him that the author was as caustic and unconstrained on the platform as he appeared in *The Potiphar Papers*.

Curtis' theme was resistance to the extension of slavery. His wife's father, Francis G. Shaw, had stimulated his zeal in the cause of freedom; and he treated the subject with a finish and strength that came from larger experience and longer observation than a young man of thirty-two could usually boast. To him, the struggle for freedom in Kansas was not less glorious than the heroic resistance in 1776, and he made it vivid by the use of historic associations. "Through these very streets," he said, "they marched who

never returned. They fell and were buried, but they can never die. Not sweeter are the flowers that make your valley fair, not greener are the pines that give your valley its name, than the memory of the brave men who died for freedom. And yet no victim of those days, sleeping under the green sod, is more truly a martyr of Liberty than every murdered man whose bones lie bleaching in this summer sun upon the silent plains of Kansas. And so long as Liberty has one martyr, so long as one drop of blood is poured out for her, so long from that single drop of bloody sweat of the agony of humanity shall spring hosts as countless as the forest leaves and mighty as the sea."[25]

Curtis thought the question of endangering the Union a mere pretence. "Twenty millions of a moral people, politically dedicated to Liberty, are asking themselves whether their government shall be administered solely in the interest of three hundred and fifty thousand slave-holders." He did not believe that these millions would dissolve the Union in the interest of these thousands. "I see a rising enthusiasm," he said, in closing; "but enthusiasm is not an election; and I hear cheers from the heart, but cheers are not voters. Every man must labour with his neighbour—in the street, at the plough, at the bench, early and late, at home and abroad. Generally we are concerned in elections with the measures of government. This time it is with the essential principle of government itself."[26]

The result of the election was not a surprise. Fremont's loss of Pennsylvania and Indiana had been foreshadowed in October, making his defeat inevitable, but the Republican victory in New York was more sweeping than the leaders had anticipated, Fremont securing a majority of 80,000 over Buchanan, and John A. King 65,000 over Amasa J. Parker.[27]

[25] Edward Cary, *Life of George William Curtis*, p. 113; New York *Weekly Tribune*, August 16, 1856.

[26] *Ibid.*, August 16, 1856.

[27] John A. King, 264,400; Amasa J. Parker, 198,616; Erastus Brooks, 130,870.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

The average vote was as follows: Republican, 266,328; Democrat, 197,172; Know-Nothing, 129,750. West and north of Albany, every congressman and nearly every assemblyman was a Republican. Reuben E. Fenton, who had been beaten for Congress in 1854 by 1676 votes, was now elected by 8000 over the same opponent. The Assembly stood 82 Republicans, 37 Democrats, and 8 Know-Nothings. In the country at large, Buchanan obtained 174 electoral votes out of 296, but he failed to receive a majority of the popular vote, leaving the vanquished more hopeful and not less cheerful than the victors. Fillmore received the electoral vote of Maryland and a popular vote of 874,534, nearly one-half as many as Buchanan and two-thirds as many as Fremont. In other words, he had divided the vote of the North, making it possible for Buchanan to carry Pennsylvania and Indiana.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE IRREPRESSIBLE CONFLICT

1857-1858

It was the duty of the Legislature of 1857 to elect a successor to Hamilton Fish, whose term as United States senator expired on the 4th of March. Fish had not been a conspicuous member of the Senate; but his great wisdom brought him large influence at a time when slavery strained the courtesy of that body. He was of a most gracious and sweet nature, and, although he never flinched from uttering or maintaining his opinions, he was a lover and maker of peace. In his *Autobiography of Seventy Years,* Senator Hoar speaks of him as the only man of high character and great ability among the leaders of the Republican party, except President Grant, who retained the friendship of Roscoe Conkling.

The contest over the senatorship brought into notice a disposition among Republicans of Democratic antecedents not to act in perfect accord with Thurlow Weed, a danger that leading Whigs had anticipated at the formation of the party. Weed's management had been disliked by anti-slavery Democrats as much as it had been distrusted by a portion of the Whig party, and, although political associations now brought them under one roof, they did not accept him as a guiding or controlling spirit. This disposition manifested itself at the state convention in the preceding September; and to allay any bitterness of feeling which the nomination of John A. King might occasion, it was provided that, in the event of success, the senator should be of Democratic antecedents. The finger of fate then pointed to Preston King. He had resisted the aggressions of the slave power, and in the

formation of the Republican party his fearless fidelity to its corner-stone principle made him doubly welcome in council; but when the Legislature met, other aspirants appeared, prominent among whom were Ward Hunt, James S. Wadsworth, and David Dudley Field.

Hunt, who was destined to occupy a place on the Court of Appeals, and, subsequently, on the Supreme Court of the United States, had taken little interest in politics. He belonged to the Democratic party, and, in 1839, had served one term in the Assembly; but his consistent devotion to Free-soilism, and his just and almost prescient appreciation of the true principles of the Republican party, gave him great prominence in the ranks of the young organisation and created a strong desire to send him to the United States Senate. Hunt was anxious and Wadsworth active. The latter's supporters, standing for him as their candidate for governor, had forced the agreement of the year before, and they now demanded that he become senator; but in the interest of harmony, both finally withdrew in favour of David Dudley Field.

The inspiration of an historic name did not yet belong to the Field family. The projector of the Atlantic cable, the future justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and the eminent New York editor, had not taken their places among the most gifted of the land, but David Dudley's activity in the Free-soil contests had made him as conspicuous a member of the new party as his celebrated Code of Civil Procedure, passed by the Legislature of 1848, had distinguished him in his profession. Promotion did not move his way, however. Thurlow Weed insisted upon Preston King. It is likely the Albany editor had not forgotten that Field, acting for George Opdyke, a millionaire client, had sued him for libel, and that, although the jury disagreed, the exciting trial had crowded the court-room for nineteen days and cost seventeen thousand dollars; but Weed did not appeal to Field's record, since he claimed the agreement at the state convention included John A. King for governor and Preston

King for senator, and to avoid controversy he adroitly consented to leave the matter to Republican legislators of Democratic antecedents, who decided in favour of King. This ended the contest, the caucus giving King 65 votes and Hunt 17.

In 1857, events gave the Republican party little encouragement in New York. Public interest in Kansas had largely died out, and, although the Dred Scott decision, holding inferentially that the Constitution carried with it the right and power to hold slaves everywhere, had startled the nation, leading press, pulpit, and public meetings to denounce it as a blow at the rights of States and to the rights of man, yet the Democrats carried the State in November, electing Gideon J. Tucker secretary of state, Sanford E. Church comptroller, Lyman Tremaine attorney-general, and Hiram Denio to the Court of Appeals. It was not a decisive victory. The Know-Nothings, who held the balance of power, involuntarily contributed a large portion of their strength to the Democratic party, giving it an aggregate vote of 194,000 to 175,000 for the Republicans, and reducing the vote of James O. Putnam, of Buffalo, the popular American candidate for secretary of state, to less than 67,000, or one-half the number polled in the preceding year.

Other causes contributed to the apparent decrease of Republican strength. The financial disturbance of 1857 appeared with great suddenness in August. There had been fluctuations in prices, with a general downward tendency, but when the crisis came it was a surprise to many of the most watchful financiers. Industry and commerce were less affected than in 1837, but the failures, representing a larger amount of capital than those of any other year in the history of the country up to 1893, astonished the people, associating in the public mind the Democratic charge of Republican extravagance with the general cry of hard times.

But whatever the cause of defeat, the outlook for the Republicans again brightened when Stephen A. Douglas opposed President Buchanan's Lecompton policy. The Kansas

Lecompton Constitution was the work of a rump convention controlled by pro-slavery delegates who declared that "the right of property is before and higher than any constitutional sanction, and the right of the owner of a slave to such slave and its increase is as inviolable as the right of the owner of any property whatever." To secure its approval by the people it was ingeniously arranged that the vote taken in December, 1857, should be "for the constitution with slavery" or "for the constitution without slavery," so that in any event the constitution, with its objectionable section, would become the organic law. This shallow scheme, hatched in the South to fix slavery upon a territory that had already declared for freedom by several thousand majority, obtained the support of the President. Douglas immediately pronounced it "a trick" and "a fraud upon the rights of the people."[1] The breach between the Illinois Senator and the Administration thus became complete.

Meantime, the governor of Kansas convened the territorial legislature in an extra session, which provided for a second election in January, 1858. The December election had stood: for the constitution with slavery, 6226; for the constitution without slavery, 569. Of these 2720 were subsequently shown to be fraudulent. The January election stood: for the constitution with slavery, 138; for the constitution without slavery, 24; against the constitution, 10,226. The President, accepting the "trick election," as Douglas called it, in which the free-state men declined to participate, forwarded a copy of the constitution to Congress, and, in spite of Douglas, it passed the Senate. An amendment in the House returned it to the people with the promise, if accepted, of a large grant of government land; but the electors spurned the bribe—the free-state men, at a third election held on August 2, 1858, rejecting the constitution by 11,000 out of 13,000 votes.

This ended the Lecompton episode, but it was destined to leave a breach in the ranks of the Democrats big with con-

[1] This debate occurred December 22, 1857.

sequences. Stephen A. Douglas was now the best known and most popular man in the North, and his popular sovereignty doctrine, as applied to the Lecompton Constitution, seemed so certain of settling the slavery question in the interest of freedom that leading Republicans of New York, notably Henry J. Raymond and Horace Greeley, not only favoured the return of Douglas to the Senate unopposed by their own party, but seriously considered the union of Douglas Democrats and Republicans. It was even suggested that Douglas become the Republican candidate for President. This would head off Seward and please Greeley, whose predilection for an "available" candidate was only equalled by his growing distrust of the New York Senator. The unanimous nomination of Abraham Lincoln for United States senator and his great debate with Douglas, disclosing the incompatibility between Douglasism and Republicanism, abruptly ended this plan; but the plausible assumption that the inhabitants of a territory had a natural right to establish, as well as prohibit, slavery had made such a profound impression upon Northern Democrats that they did not hesitate to approve the Douglas doctrine regardless of its unpopularity in the South.

In the summer of 1858, candidates for governor were nominated in New York. The Republican convention, convened at Syracuse on the 8th of September, like its predecessor in 1856, was divided into Weed and anti-Weed delegates. The latter, composed of Know-Nothings, Radicals of Democratic antecedents, and remnants of the prohibition party, wanted Timothy Jenkins for governor. Jenkins was a very skilful political organiser. He had served Oneida County as district attorney and for six years in Congress, and he now had the united support of many men who, although without special influence, made a very formidable showing. But Weed was not looking in that direction. His earliest choice was Simeon Draper of New York City, whom he had thrust aside two years before, and when sudden financial embarrassment rendered Draper unavailable, he encouraged the candidacy of James H. Cook of Saratoga until Jenkins'

strength alarmed him. Then he took up Edwin D. Morgan, and for the first time became a delegate to a state convention.

Weed found a noisy company at Syracuse. Horace Greeley as usual was in a receptive mood. The friends of George Patterson thought it time for his promotion. Alexander S. Diven of Elmira, a state senator and forceful speaker, who subsequently served one term in Congress, had several active, influential backers, while John A. King's friends feebly resisted his retirement. The bulk of the Americans opposed Edwin D. Morgan because of his broad sympathies with foreign-born citizens; but Weed clung to him, and on the first ballot he received 116 of the 254 votes. Jenkins got 51 and Greeley 3. On the next ballot one of Greeley's votes went to Jenkins, who received 52 to 165 for Morgan. Robert Campbell of Steuben was then nominated for lieutenant-governor by acclamation and Seward's senatorial course unqualifiedly indorsed.

Edwin D. Morgan was in his forty-eighth year. He had been alderman, merchant, and railroad president; for four years in the early fifties he served as a state senator; more recently, he had acted as chairman of the Republican state committee and of the Republican national convention. Weed did not have Morgan's wise, courageous course as war governor, Union general, and United States senator to guide him, but he knew that his personal character was of the highest, his public life without stain, and that he had wielded the power of absolute disinterestedness. Morgan was a fine specimen of manhood. He stood perfectly erect, with well poised head, his large, lustrous eyes inviting confidence; and the urbanity of his manner softening the answers that showed he possessed a mind of his own. No man among his contemporaries had a larger number of devoted friends. He was a New Englander by birth. More than one person of his name and blood in Connecticut was noted for public spirit, but none developed greater courage, or evidenced equal sagacity and efficiency.

For several weeks before the convention, the Americans

talked of a fusion ticket with the Republicans, and to encourage the plan both state conventions met at the same time and place. In sentiment they were in substantial accord, and men like Washington Hunt, the former governor, and James O. Putnam, hoped for union. Hunt had declined to join the Republican party at its formation, and, in 1856, had followed Fillmore into the ranks of the Americans; but their division in 1857 disgusted him, and, with Putnam and many others, he was now favourable to a fusion of the two parties. After conferring for two days, however, the Republicans made the mistake of nominating candidates for governor and lieutenant-governor before agreeing upon a division of the offices, at which the Americans took offence and put up a separate ticket, with Lorenzo Burrows for governor. Burrows was a man of considerable force of character, a native of Connecticut, and a resident of Albion. He had served four years in Congress as a Whig, and in 1855 was elected state comptroller as a Know-Nothing.

The failure of the fusionists greatly pleased the Democrats, who, in spite of the bitter contest for seats in the New York City delegation, exhibited confidence and some enthusiasm at their state convention on September 15. The Softs, led by Daniel E. Sickles, represented Tammany; the Hards, marshalled by Fernando Wood, were known as the custom-house delegation. In 1857, the city delegates had been evenly divided between the two factions; but this year the Softs, confident of their strength, insisted upon having their entire delegation seated, and, on a motion to make Horatio Seymour temporary chairman, they proved their control by a vote of 54 to 35. The admission of Tammany drew a violent protest from Fernando Wood and his delegates, who then left the convention in a body amidst a storm of hisses and cheers.

A strong disposition existed to nominate Seymour for governor. Having been thrice a candidate and once elected, however, he peremptorily declined to stand. This left the way open to Amasa J. Parker, an exceptionally strong candidate, but one who had led the ticket to defeat in 1856. John J.

Taylor of Oswego, whose congressional career had been limited to a single term because of his vote for the Kansas-Nebraska bill in 1854, became the nominee for lieutenant-governor by acclamation. In its platform, the convention very cunningly resolved that it was "content" to have the American people judge President Buchanan's administration by its acts, and that it "hailed with satisfaction" the fact that the people of Kansas had settled the Lecompton question by practically making the territory a free State.

Thus Parker stood for Buchanan and popular sovereignty, while the Republicans denounced the Lecompton trick as a wicked scheme to subvert popular sovereignty. It was a sharp issue. The whole power of the Administration had been invoked to carry out the Lecompton plan, and New York congressmen were compelled to support it or be cast aside. But in their speeches, Parker and his supporters sought to minimise the President's part and to magnify the Douglas doctrine. It was an easy and plausible way of settling the slavery question, and one which commended itself to those who wished it settled by the Democratic party. John Van Buren's use of it recalled something of the influence and power that attended his speeches in the Free-soil campaign of 1848. Since that day he had been on too many sides, perhaps, to command the hearty respect of any, but he loved fair play, which the Lecompton scheme had outraged, and the application of the doctrine that seemed to have brought peace and a free State to the people appealed to him as a correct principle of government that must make for good. He presented it in the clear, impassioned style for which he was so justly noted. His speeches contained much that did not belong in the remarks of a statesman; but, upon the question of popular sovereignty, as illustrated in Kansas, John Van Buren prepared the way in New York for the candidacy and coming of Douglas in 1860.

Roscoe Conkling, now for the first time a candidate for Congress, exhibited something of the dexterity and ability that characterised his subsequent career. The public, friends

and foes, did not yet judge him by a few striking and picturesque qualities, for his vanity, imperiousness, and power to hate had not yet matured, but already he was a close student of political history, and of great capacity as an orator. The intense earnestness of purpose, the marvellous power of rapidly absorbing knowledge, the quickness of wit, and the firmness which Cato never surpassed, marked him then, as afterward upon the floor of Congress, a mighty power amidst great antagonists. Perhaps his anger was not so quickly excited, nor the shafts of his sarcasm so barbed and cruel, but his speeches—dramatic, rhetorical, with the ever-present, withering sneer—were rapidly advancing him to leadership in central New York. A quick glance at his tall, graceful form, capacious chest, and massive head, removed him from the class of ordinary persons. Towering above his fellows, he looked the patrician. It was known, too, that he had muscle as well as brains. Indeed, his nomination to Congress had been influenced somewhat by the recent assault on Charles Sumner. "Preston Brooks won't hurt him," said the leader of the Fifth Ward, in Utica.[2]

The keynote of the campaign, however, was not spoken until Seward made his historic speech at Rochester on October 25. The October success in Pennsylvania had thrilled the Republicans; and the New York election promised a victory like that of 1856. Whatever advantage could be gained by past events and future expectations was now Seward's. Lincoln's famous declaration, "I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free," had been uttered in June, and his joint debate with Douglas, concluded on October 15, had cleared the political atmosphere, making it plain that popular sovereignty was not the pathway for Republicans to follow. Seward's utterance, therefore, was to be the last word in the campaign.

It was not entirely clear just what this utterance would be. Seward had shown much independence of late. In the preceding February his course on the army bill caused se-

[2] Alfred R. Conkling, *Life and Letters of Roscoe Conkling*, p. 77.

vere comment. Because of difficulties with the Mormons in Utah it was proposed to increase the army; but Republicans objected, believing the additional force would be improperly used in Kansas. Seward, however, spoke and voted for the bill. "He is perfectly bedevilled," wrote Senator Fessenden; "he thinks himself wiser than all of us."[3] Later, in March, he caught something of the popular-sovereignty idea—enough, at least, to draw a mild protest from Salmon P. Chase. "I regretted," he wrote, "the apparent countenance you gave to the idea that the Douglas doctrine of poular sovereignty will do for us to stand upon for the present."[4] Seward did not go so far as Greeley and Raymond, but his expressions indicated that States were to be admitted with or without slavery as the people themselves decided. Before, he had insisted that Congress had the right to make conditions; now, his willingness cheerfully to co-operate with Douglas and other "new defenders of the sacred cause in Kansas" seemed to favour a new combination, if not a new party. In other words, Seward had been feeling his way until it aroused a faint suspicion that he was trimming to catch the moderate element of his party. If he had had any thought of harmony of feeling between Douglas and the Republicans, however, the Lincoln debate compelled him to abandon it, and in his speech of October 25 he confined himself to the discussion of the two radically different political systems that divided the North and the South.

The increase in population and in better facilities for internal communication, he declared, had rapidly brought these two systems into close contact, and collision was the result. "Shall I tell you what this collision means? They who think it is accidental, unnecessary, the work of interested or fanatical agitators, and therefore ephemeral, mistake the case altogether. It is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces, and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slave-hold-

[3] James S. Pike, *First Blows of the Civil War*, p. 379.
[4] Warden, *Life of Chase*, p. 343.

ing nation, or entirely a free labour nation. Either the cotton and rice fields of South Carolina and the sugar plantations of Louisiana will ultimately be tilled by free labour, and Charleston and New Orleans become marts for legitimate merchandise alone, or else the rye fields and wheat fields of Massachusetts and New York must again be surrendered by their farmers to slave culture and to the production of slaves, and Boston and New York become once more markets for trade in the bodies and souls of men."[5]

It was one of the most impressive and commanding speeches that had ever come from his eloquent lips, but there was nothing new in it. As early as 1848 he had made the antagonism between freedom and slavery the leading feature of a speech that attracted much attention at the time, and in 1856 he spoke of "an ancient and eternal conflict between two entirely antagonistic systems of human labour." Indeed, for ten years, in company with other distinguished speakers, he had been ringing the changes on this same idea. Only four months before, Lincoln had proclaimed that "A house divided against itself cannot stand."[6] Yet no one had given special attention to it. But now the two words, "irrepressible conflict," seemed to sum up the antipathy between the two systems, and to alarm men into a realisation of the real and perhaps the immediate danger that confronted them. "Hitherto," says Frederick W. Seward in the biography of his father, "while it was accepted and believed by those who followed his political teachings, among his opponents it had fallen upon unheeding ears and incredulous minds. But now, at last, the country was beginning to wake up to the gravity of the crisis, and when he pointed to the 'irrepressible conflict' he was formulating, in clear words, a vague and unwilling belief that was creeping over every intelligent Northern man."[7]

The effect was instantaneous. Democratic press and ora-

[5] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 351.
[6] *Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, p. 48.
[7] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 352.

tors became hysterical, denouncing him as "vile," "wicked," "malicious," and "vicious." The *Herald* called him an "arch-agitator," more dangerous than Beecher, Garrison, or Theodore Parker. It was denied that any conflict existed except such as he was trying to foment. Even the New York *Times*, his own organ, thought the idea of abolishing slavery in the slave States rather fanciful, while the Springfield *Republican* pronounced his declaration impolitic and likely to do him and his party harm. On the other hand, the radical anti-slavery papers thought it bold and commendable. "With the instinct of a statesman," the *Tribune* said, "Seward discards all minor, temporary, and delusive issues, and treats only of what is final and essential. Clear, calm, sagacious, profound, and impregnable, showing a masterly comprehension of the present aspect and future prospects of the great question which now engrosses our politics,this speech will be pondered by every thoughtful man in the land and confirm the eminence so long maintained by its author."[3] James Watson Webb, in the *Courier and Enquirer*, declared that it made Seward and Republicanism one and inseparable, and settled the question in New York as to who should be the standard-bearer in 1860.

[3] New York *Daily Tribune*, October 27, 1858.

"Few speeches from the stump have attracted so great attention or exerted so great an influence. The eminence of the man combined with the startling character of the doctrine to make it engross the public mind. Republicans looked upon the doctrine announced as the well-weighed conclusion of a profound thinker and of a man of wide experience, who united the political philosopher with the practical politician. It is not probable that Lincoln's 'house divided against itself' speech had any influence in bringing Seward to this position. He would at this time have scorned the notion of borrowing ideas from Lincoln; and had he studied the progress of the Illinois canvass, he must have seen that the declaration did not meet with general favour. In February of this year there had been bodied forth in Seward the politician. Now, a far-seeing statesman spoke. One was compared to Webster's 7th-of-March speech,—the other was commended by the Abolitionists."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 2, pp. 344-5.

The result of the election was favourable to the Republicans, Morgan's majority over Parker being 17,440.[9] Ninety-nine members of the Legislature and twenty-nine congressmen were either Republicans or anti-Lecompton men. But, compared with the victory of 1856, it was a disappointment. John A. King had received a majority of 65,000 over Parker. The *Tribune* was quick to charge some of this loss to Seward. "The clamour against Sewardism lost us many votes," it declared the morning after the election. Two or three days later, as the reduced majority became more apparent, it explained that "A knavish clamour was raised on the eve of election by a Swiss press against Governor Seward's late speech at Rochester as revolutionary and disunionist. Our loss from this source is considerable." The returns, however, showed plainly that one-half of the Americans, following the precedent set in 1857, had voted for Parker, while the other half, irritated by the failure of the union movement at Syracuse, had supported Burrows. Had the coalition succeeded, Morgan's majority must have been larger than King's. But, small as it was, there was abundant cause for Republican rejoicing, since it kept the Empire State in line with the Republican States of New England, Ohio, Michigan, Iowa, and Wisconsin, which were now joined for the first time by Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Minnesota. Indeed, of the free States, only California and Oregon had indorsed Buchanan's administration.

[9] Edwin D. Morgan, 247,953; Amasa J. Parker, 230,513; Lorenzo Burrows, 60,880; Gerrit Smith, 5470.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

CHAPTER XIX

SEWARD'S BID FOR THE PRESIDENCY

1859-1860

The elections in 1858 simplified the political situation. With the exception of Pennsylvania, where the tariff question played a conspicuous part, all the Northern States had disapproved President Buchanan's Lecompton policy, and the people, save the old-line Whigs, the Abolitionists, and the Americans, had placed themselves under the leadership of Seward, Lincoln, and Douglas, who now clearly represented the political sentiments of the North. If any hope still lingered among the Democrats of New York, that the sectional division of their party might be healed, it must have been quickly shattered by the fierce debates over popular sovereignty and the African slave-trade which occurred in the United States Senate in February, 1859, between Jefferson Davis, representing the slave power of the South, and Stephen A. Douglas, the recognised champion of his party in the free States.

Under these circumstances, the Democratic national convention, called to meet in Charleston, South Carolina, on April 23, 1860, became the centre of interest in the state convention, which met at Syracuse on the 14th of September, 1859. Each faction desired to control the national delegation. As usual, Daniel S. Dickinson was a candidate for the Presidency. He believed his friends in the South would prefer him to Douglas if he could command an unbroken New York delegation, and, with the hope of having the delegates selected by districts as the surer road to success, he flirted with Fernando Wood until the latter's perfidy turned

his ear to the siren song of the Softs, who promised him a solid delegation whenever it could secure his nomination. Dickinson listened with distrust. He was the last of the old leaders of the Hards. Seymour and Marcy had left them; but "Scripture Dick," as he was called, because of his many Bible quotations, stood resolutely and arrogantly at his post, defying the machinations of his opponents with merciless criticism. The Binghamton Stalwart did not belong in the first rank of statesmen. He was neither an orator nor a tactful party leader. It cannot be said of him that he was a quick-witted, incisive, and successful debater;[1] but, on critical days, when the fate of his faction hung in the balance, he was a valiant fighter, absolutely without fear, who took blows as bravely as he gave them, and was loyal to all the interests which he espoused. He now dreaded the Softs bearing gifts. But their evident frankness and his supreme need melted the estrangement that had long existed between them.

In the selection of delegates to the state convention Fernando Wood and Tammany had a severe struggle. Tammany won, but Wood appeared at Syracuse with a full delegation, and for half an hour before the convention convened Wood endeavoured to do by force what he knew could not be accomplished by votes. He had brought with him a company of roughs, headed by John C. Heenan, "the Benicia Boy," and fifteen minutes before the appointed hour, in the absence of a majority of the delegates, he organised the convention, electing his own chairman and appointing his own committees. When the bulk of the Softs arrived they proceeded to elect their chairman. This was the signal for a riot, in the course of which the chairman of the regulars was knocked down and an intimidating display of pistols exhibited. Finally the regulars adjourned, leaving the hall to the Wood contestants, who completed their organisation, and, after re-

[1] " 'Scripture Dick,' whom we used to consider the sorriest of slow jokers, has really brightened up."—New York *Tribune*, March 17, 1859.

nominating the Democratic state officers elected in 1857, adjourned without day.

Immediately, the regulars reappeared; and as the Hards from the up-state counties answered to the roll call, the Softs vociferously applauded. Then Dickinson made a characteristic speech. He did not fully decide to join the Softs until Fernando Wood had sacrificed the only chance of overthrowing them; but when he did go over, he burned the bridges behind him. The Softs were delighted with Dickinson's bearing and Dickinson's speech. It united the party throughout the State and put Tammany in easy control of New York City

With harmony restored there was little for the convention to do except to renominate the state officers, appoint delegates to the Charleston convention who were instructed to vote as a unit, and adopt the platform. These resolutions indorsed the administration of President Buchanan; approved popular sovereignty; condemned the "irrepressible conflict" speech of Seward as a "revolutionary threat" aimed at republican institutions; and opposed the enlargement of the Erie canal to a depth of seven feet.

The Republican state convention had previously assembled on September 7 and selected a ticket, equally divided between men of Democratic and Whig antecedents, headed by Elias W. Leavenworth for secretary of state. Great confidence was felt in its election until the Americans met in convention on September 22 and indorsed five of its candidates and four Democrats. This, however, did not abate Republican activity, and, in the end, six of the nine Republican nominees were elected. The weight of the combined opposition, directed against Leavenworth, caused his defeat by less than fifteen hundred, showing that Republicans were gradually absorbing all the anti-slavery elements.

Upon what theory the American party nominated an eclectic ticket did not appear, although the belief obtained that it hoped to cloud Seward's presidential prospects by creating the impression that the Senator was unable, without assist-

ance, to carry his own State on the eve of a great national contest. But whatever the reason, the result deeply humiliated the party, since its voting strength, reduced to less than 21,000, proved insufficient to do more than expose the weakness. This was the last appearance of the American party. It had endeavoured to extend its life and increase its influence; but after its refusal to interdict slavery in the territories it rapidly melted away. Henry Wilson, senator and Vice President, declared that he would give ten years of his life if he could blot out his membership in the Know-Nothing party, since it associated him throughout his long and attractive public career with proscriptive principles of which he was ashamed.

In the midst of the campaign the country was startled by John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry. For two years Brown had lived an uneventful life in New York on land in the Adirondack region given him by Gerrit Smith. In 1851, he moved to Ohio, and from thence to Kansas, where he became known as John Brown of Osawatomie. He had been a consistent enemy of slavery, working the underground railroad and sympathising with every scheme for the rescue of slaves; but once in Kansas, he readily learned the use of a Sharpe's rifle. In revenge for the destruction of Lawrence, he deliberately massacred the pro-slavery settlers living along Pottawatomie creek. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," was a favourite text. His activity made him a national character. The President offered $250 for his arrest and the governor of Missouri added $3000 more. In 1858, he returned East, collected money to aid an insurrection among the slaves of Virginia, and on October 17, 1859, with eighteen men, began his quixotic campaign by cutting telegraph wires, stopping trains, and seizing the national armory at Harper's Ferry. At one time he had taken sixty prisoners.

The affair was soon over, but not until the entire band was killed or captured. Brown, severely hurt, stood between two of his sons, one dead and the other mortally wounded, refus-

ing to surrender so long as he could fight. After his capture, he said, coolly, in reply to a question: "We are Abolitionists from the North, come to release and take your slaves."

The trial, conviction, and execution of Brown and his captured companions ended the episode, but its influence was destined to be far-reaching. John Brown became idealised. His bearing as he stood between his dead and dying sons, his truth-telling answers, and the evidence of his absolute unselfishness filled many people in the North with a profound respect for the passion that had driven him on, while his bold invasion of a slave State and his reckless disregard of life and property alarmed the South into the sincere belief that his methods differed only in degree from the teachings of those who talked of an irrepressible conflict and a higher law. To aid him in regaining his lost position in the South, Stephen A. Douglas proclaimed it as his "firm and deliberate belief that the Harper Ferry crime was the natural, logical, and inevitable result of the doctrine and teachings of the Republican party."[2]

The sentimentalists of the North generally sympathised with Brown. Emerson spoke of him as "that new saint awaiting his martyrdom, and who, if he shall suffer, will make the gallows glorious like the cross."[3] In the same spirit Thoreau called him "an angel of light," and Longfellow wrote in his diary on the day of the execution: "The date of a new revolution, quite as much needed as the old one."[4] But the Republican leaders deprecated the affair, characterising it as "among the gravest of crimes," and denying that it had any relation to their party except as it influenced the minds of all men for or against slavery.

William H. Seward was in Europe at the time of the raid. Early in May, 1859, his friends had celebrated his departure from New York, escorting him to Sandy Hook, and leaving

[2] *Congressional Globe*, 36th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 553-4 (January 23, 1860).

[3] James E. Cabot, *Life of Emerson*, p. 597.

[4] Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Longfellow*, Vol. 2, p. 347.

him finally amidst shouts and music, bells and whistles, and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs. Such a scene is common enough nowadays, but then it was unique. His return at the close of December, after an absence of eight months, was the occasion of great rejoicing. A salute of a hundred guns was fired in City Hall Park, the mayor and common council tendered him a public reception, and after hours of speech-making and hand-shaking he proceeded slowly homeward amidst waiting crowds at every station. At Auburn the streets were decorated, and the people, regardless of creed or party, escorted him in procession to his home. Few Republicans in New York had any doubt at that moment of his nomination and election to the Presidency.

On going to Washington Seward found the United States Senate investigating the Harper's Ferry affair and the House of Representatives deadlocked over the election of a speaker. Bitterness and threats of disunion characterised the proceeding at both ends of the Capitol. "This Union," said one congressman, "great and powerful as it is, can be tumbled down by the act of any one Southern State. If Florida withdraws, the federal government would not dare attack her. If it did, the bands would dissolve as if melted by lightning."[5] Referring to the possibility of the election of a Republican President, another declared that "We will never submit to the inauguration of a Black Republican President. You may elect Seward to be President of the North; but of the South, never! Whenever a President is elected by a fanatical majority of the North, those whom I represent are ready, let the consequences be what they may, to fall back on their reserved rights, and say, 'As to this Union we have no longer any lot or part in it.'"[6]

In the midst of these fiery, disunion utterances, on the 21st of February, 1860, Seward introduced a bill for the admission of Kansas into the Union. After the overwhelming defeat of the Lecompton Constitution, the free-state men had

[5] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 441.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 442.

controlled the territorial legislature, repealed the slave code of 1855, and, in the summer of 1859, convened a constitutional convention at Wyandotte. A few weeks later the people ratified the result of its work by a large majority. It was this Wyandotte Constitution under which Seward proposed to admit Kansas, and he fixed the consideration of his measure for the 29th of February. This would be two days after Abraham Lincoln had spoken in New York City.

Lincoln, whose fame had made rapid strides in the West since his debate with Douglas in 1858, had been anxious to visit New York. It was the home of Seward, the centre of Republican strength, and to him practically an unknown land. Through the invitation of the Young Men's Central Republican Union he was now to lecture at Cooper Institute on the 27th of February. It was arranged at first that he speak in Henry Ward Beecher's church, but the change, relieving him from too close association with the great apostle of abolition, opened a wider door for his reception. Personally he was known to very few people in the city or State. In 1848, on his way to New England to take the stump, he had called upon Thurlow Weed at Albany, and together they visited Millard Fillmore, then candidate for Vice President; but the meeting made such a slight impression upon the editor of the *Evening Journal* that he had entirely forgotten it. Thirty years before, in one of his journeys to Illinois, William Cullen Bryant had met him. Lincoln was then a tall, awkward lad, the captain of a militia company in the Black Hawk War, whose racy and original conversation attracted the young poet; but Bryant, too, had forgotten him, and it was long after the famous debate that he identified his prairie acquaintance as the opponent of Douglas. Lincoln, however, did not come as a stranger. His encounter with the great Illinoisan had marked him as a powerful and logical reasoner whose speeches embraced every political issue of the day and cleared up every doubtful point. Well-informed people everywhere knew of him. He was not yet a national character, but he had a national reputation.

Though Lincoln's lecture was one of a course, the admission fee did not restrain an eager audience from filling the commodious hall. "Since the day of Clay and Webster," said the *Tribune*, "no man has spoken to a larger assemblage of the intellect and mental culture of our city."[7] Bryant acted as chairman of the meeting, and other well-known men of the city occupied the stage. In his *Life of Lincoln*, Herndon suggests that the new suit of clothes which seemed so fine in his Springfield home was in such awkward contrast with the neatly fitting dress of the New Yorkers that it disconcerted him, and the brilliant audience dazzled and embarrassed him; but his hearers thought only of the pregnant matter of the discourse, so calmly and logically discussed that Horace Greeley, years afterward, pronounced it "the very best political address to which I ever listened, and I have heard some of Webster's grandest."[8]

Lincoln had carefully prepared for the occasion. He came East to show what manner of man he was, and while he evidenced deep moral feeling which kept his audience in a glow, he combined with it rare political sagacity, notably in omitting the "house divided against itself" declaration. He argued that the Republican party was not revolutionary, but conservative, since it maintained the doctrine of the fathers who held and acted upon the opinion that Congress had the power to prohibit slavery in the territories. "Some of you," he said, addressing himself to the Southern people, "are for reviving the foreign slave trade; some for Congress forbidding the territories to prohibit slavery within their limits; some for maintaining slavery in the territories through the judiciary; some for the 'great principle' that if one man would enslave another, no third man should object, fantastically called popular sovereignty; but never a man among you is in favour of federal prohibition of slavery in federal territories, according to the practice of our fathers who formed

[7] New York *Tribune*, February 28, 1860.

[8] *Century Magazine*, July, 1891, p. 373. An address of Greeley written in 1868.

the government under which we live. You say we have made the slavery question more prominent than it formerly was. We deny it. We admit that it is more prominent, but we deny that we made it so. It was not we, but you who discarded the old policy of the fathers." Of Southern threats of disunion, he said: "Your purpose, then, plainly stated, is that you will destroy the government unless you be allowed to construe and enforce the Constitution as you please on all points in dispute between you and us. You will rule or ruin in all events." Referring to the Harper's Ferry episode, he said: "That affair in its philosophy corresponds with the many attempts related in history at the assassination of kings and emperors. An enthusiast broods over the oppression of a people, until he fancies himself commissioned by heaven to liberate them. He ventures the attempt which ends in little else than his own execution."

Lincoln's lecture did not disappoint. He had entertained and interested the vast assemblage, which frequently rang with cheers and shouts of applause as the gestures and the mirth-provoking look emphasised the racy hits that punctuated the address. "No man," said the *Tribune,* "ever before made such an impression on his first appeal to a New York audience. He is one of Nature's orators."[9]

Two days later, Seward addressed the United States Senate. There is no evidence that he fixed this date because of the Cooper Institute lecture. The gravity of the political situation demanded some expression from him; but the knowledge of the time of Lincoln's speech gave him ample opportunity to arrange to follow it with one of his own, if he wished to have the last word, or to institute a comparison of their respective views on the eve of the national convention. However this may be, Seward regarded his utterances on this occasion of the utmost importance. He was the special object of Southern vituperation. A "Fire-Eater" of the South publicly advertised that he would be one of one hundred "gentlemen" to give twenty-five dollars each for the

[9] New York *Tribune*, March 1, 1860.

heads of Horace Greeley, Henry Ward Beecher, and forty other prominent Northern leaders in and out of Congress, but for the head of Seward his proposed subscription was multiplied twenty fold. It is noticeable that in this long list of "traitors" the name of Abraham Lincoln does not appear. It was Seward whom the South expected the Republican party would nominate for President, and in him it saw the narrow-minded, selfish, obstinate Abolitionist who hated them as intensely as they despised him. To dispossess the Southern mind of this feeling the Auburn statesman now endeavoured to show that if elected President he would not treat the South unfriendly.

Seward's speech bears evidence of careful preparation. It was not only read to friends for criticism, but Henry B. Stanton, in his *Random Recollections*, says that Seward, before the day of its delivery, assisted him in describing such a scene in the Senate as he desired laid before the public. On his return to Washington, Seward had not been received with a show of friendship by his associates from the South. It was remarked that while Republican senators greeted him warmly, "his Southern friends were afraid to be seen talking to him." On the occasion of his speech, however, he wished the record to show every senator in his place and deeply interested.

Visitors to the Senate on the 29th of February crowded every available spot in the galleries. "But it was on the floor itself," wrote Stanton to the *Tribune*, "that the most interesting spectacle presented itself. Every senator seemed to be in his seat. Hunter, Davis, Toombs, Mason, Slidell, Hammond, Clingman, Brown, and Benjamin paid closest attention to the speaker. Crittenden listened to every word. Douglas affected to be self-possessed; but his nervousness of mien gave token that the truths now uttered awakened memories of the Lecompton contest, when he, Seward, and Crittenden, the famous triumvirate, led the allies in their attack upon the Administration. The members of the House streamed over to the north wing of the Capitol almost in a

body, leaving Reagan of Texas to discourse to empty benches, while Seward held his levee in the Senate."[10]

Seward lacked the tones, the kindly eye, and the mirth-provoking look of Lincoln. His voice was husky, his manner didactic, and his physique unimposing, but he had the gift of expression, and the ability to formulate his opinions and marshal his facts in lucid sentences that harmonised with Northern sentiments and became at once the creed and rallying cry of his party; and, on this occasion, he held the Senate spellbound for two hours, the applause at one time becoming so long continued that the presiding officer threatened to clear the galleries. He was always calm and temperate. But it seemed now to be his desire, in language more subdued, perhaps, than he had ever used before, to allay the fears of what would happen should the Republican party succeed in electing a President; and, without the sacrifice of any principle, he endeavoured to outline the views of Republicans and the spirit that animated himself. There was nothing new in his speech. He avoided the higher law and irrepressible conflict doctrines, and omitted his former declarations that slavery "can and must be abolished, and you and I can and must do it." In like manner he failed to demand, as formerly, that the Supreme Court "recede from its spurious judgment" in the Dred Scott case. But he reviewed with the same logic that had characterised his utterances for twenty years, the relation of the Constitution to slavery; the influence of slavery upon both parties; the history of the Kansas controversy; and the manifest advantages of the Union, dwelling at length and with much originality upon the firm hold it had upon the people, and the certainty that it would survive the rudest shocks of faction. Of the Harper's Ferry affair, Seward spoke with more sympathy than Lincoln. "While generous and charitable natures will probably concede that John Brown acted on earnest, though fatally erroneous convictions," he said, "yet all good citizens will nevertheless agree that this attempt to execute an un-

[10] New York *Tribune*, March 1, 1860.

lawful purpose in Virginia by invasion, involving servile war, was an act of sedition and treason, and criminal in just the extent that it affected the public peace and was destructive of human happiness and life."

It has been noted with increasing admiration that Lincoln and Seward, without consultation and in the presence of a great impending crisis, paralleled one another's views so closely. Each embodied the convictions and aspirations of his party. The spirit of an unsectarian patriotism that characterised Seward's speech proved highly satisfactory to the great mass of Republicans. The New York *Times* rejoiced that its tone indicated "a desire to allay and remove unfounded prejudice from the public mind," and pronounced "the whole tenor of it in direct contradiction to the sentiments which have been imputed to him on the strength of declarations which he has hitherto made."[11] Samuel Bowles of the Springfield *Republican* wrote Thurlow Weed that the state delegation—so "very marked" is the reaction in Seward's favour—would "be so strong for him as to be against anybody else," and that "I hear of ultra old Whigs in Boston who say they are ready to take him up on his recent speech."[12] Charles A. Dana, then managing editor of the *Tribune,* declared that "Seward stock is rising," and Salmon P. Chase admitted that "there seems to be at present a considerable set toward Seward." Nathaniel P. Banks, who was himself spoken of as a candidate, thought Seward's prospects greatly enhanced.

But a growing and influential body of men in the Republican party severely criticised the speech because it lacked the moral earnestness of the "higher law" spirit. To them it seemed as if Seward had made a bid for the Presidency, and that the irrepressible conflict of 1858 was suddenly transformed into the condition of a mild and patient lover who is determined not to quarrel. "Differences of opinion, even on the subject of slavery," he said, "are with us political, not

[11] New York *Times*, March 2, 1860.

[12] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 260.

social or personal differences. There is not one disunionist or disloyalist among us all. We are altogether unconscious of any process of dissolution going on among us or around us. We have never been more patient, and never loved the representatives of other sections more than now. We bear the same testimony for the people around us here. We bear the same testimony for all the districts and States we represent."

This did not sound like the terrible "irrepressible conflict" pictured at Rochester. Wendell Phillips' famous epigram that "Seward makes a speech in Washington on the tactics of the Republican party, but phrases it to suit Wall street,"[13] voiced the sentiment of his critics. Garrison was not less severe. "The temptation which proved too powerful for Webster," he wrote, "is seducing Seward to take the same downward course."[14] Greeley did not vigorously combat this idea. "Governor Seward," he said, "has so long been stigmatised as a radical that those who now first study his inculcations carefully will be astonished to find him so eminently pacific and conservative. Future generations will be puzzled to comprehend how such sentiments as his, couched in the language of courtesy and suavity which no provocation can induce him to discard, should ever have been denounced as incendiary."[15]

No doubt much of this criticism was due to personal jealousy, or to the old prejudice against him as a Whig leader who had kept himself in accord with the changing tendencies of a progressive people, alternately exciting them with irrepressible conflicts and soothing them with sentences of conservative wisdom; but Bowles, in approving the speech because it had brought ultra old Whigs of Boston to Seward's support, exposed the real reason for the adverse criticism, since an address that would capture an old-line Whig, who indorsed Fillmore in 1856, could scarcely satisfy the type of

[13] New York *Tribune*, March 22, 1860.
[14] *The Liberator*, March 9, 1860.
[15] New York *Tribune*, March 2, 1860.

Republicans who believed, with John A. Andrew, that whether the Harper's Ferry enterprise was wise or foolish, "John Brown himself is right." It is little wonder, perhaps, that these people began to doubt whether Seward had strong convictions.

CHAPTER XX

DEAN RICHMOND'S LEADERSHIP AT CHARLESTON

1860

When the Democratic national convention opened at Charleston, South Carolina, on April 23, 1860, Fernando Wood insisted upon the admission of his delegation on equal terms with Tammany. The supreme question was the nomination of Stephen A. Douglas, and the closeness of the contest between the Douglas and anti-Douglas forces made New York's thirty-five votes most important. Wood promised his support, if admitted, to the anti-Douglas faction; the Softs, led by Dean Richmond, encouraged Douglas and whispered kindly words to the supporters of James Guthrie of Kentucky. It was apparent that Wood's delegation had no standing. It had been appointed before the legal hour for the convention's assembling in the absence of a majority of the delegates, and upon no theory could its regularity be accepted; but Wood, mild and bland in manner, made a favourable impression in Charleston. No one would have pointed him out in a group of gentlemen as the redoubtable mayor of New York City, who invented surprises, and, with a retinue of roughs, precipitated trouble in conventions. His adroit speeches, too, had won him advantage, and when he pledged himself to the ultra men of the South his admission became a necessary factor to their success. This, naturally, threw the Softs into the camp of Douglas, whose support made their admission possible.[1]

[1] "The Fernando Wood movement was utterly overthrown in the preliminary stages. Several scenes in the fight were highly entertaining. Mr. Fisher of Virginia was picked out to make the onslaught, when John Cochrane of New York, who is the brains of

The New York delegation, composed of distinguished business men and adroit politicians, was divided into two factions, each one fancying itself the more truly patriotic, public-spirited, and independent.[2] The Softs had trapped the Hards into allegiance with the promise of a solid support for Dickinson whenever the convention manifested a disposition to rally around him—and then gagged them by a rigid unit rule. This made Dickinson declamatory and bitter, while the Softs themselves, professing devotion to Douglas, exhibited an unrest which indicated that changed conditions would easily change their devotion. Altogether, it was a disappointing delegation, distrusted by the Douglas men, feared by the South, and at odds with itself; yet, it is doubtful if the Empire State ever sent an abler body of men to a national convention. Its chairman, Dean Richmond, now at the height of his power, was a man of large and comprehensive vision, and, although sometimes charged with insincerity, his rise in politics had not been more rapid than his success in business. Before his majority he had become the director of a bank, and at the age of thirty-eight he had established himself in Buffalo as a prosperous dealer and shipper. Then, he aided in consolidating seven corporations into the New York Central Railroad—securing the necessary legislation for the purpose—and in 1853 had become its vice president. Eleven years later, and two years before his death, he became its president. In 1860, Dean Richmond was in his forty-seventh year, incapable of any meanness, yet adroit, shrewd, and skilful, stating very perfectly the judgment of a clear-headed and sound business man. As chairman of the Democratic state committee, he was a somewhat rugged but an intensely interesting personality, who had won deservedly by his work a foremost place among the most influential na-

the Cagger-Cassidy delegation, shut him off with a point of order."—M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 20.

[2]"Many of New York's delegates were eminent men of business, anxious for peace; others were adroit politicians, adept at a trade and eager to held the party together by any means."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 474.

tional leaders of the party. His opinion carried great weight, and, though he spoke seldom, his mind moved rapidly by a very simple and direct path to correct conclusions.[3]

Around Richmond were clustered August Belmont and Augustus Schell of New York City, Peter Cagger and Erastus Corning of Albany, David L. Seymour of Troy, Sanford E. Church of Albion, and a dozen others quite as well known. Perhaps none of them equalled the powerful Richardson of Illinois, who led the Douglas forces, or his brilliant lieutenant, Charles E. Stuart of Michigan, whose directions and suggestions on the floor of the convention, guided by an unerring knowledge of parliamentary law, were regarded with something of dread even by Caleb Cushing, the gifted president of the convention; but John Cochrane of New York City, who had attended Democratic state and national conventions for a quarter of a century, was quite able to represent the Empire State to its advantage on the floor or elsewhere. He was a man of a high order of ability, and an accomplished and forceful public speaker, whose sonorous voice, imposing manner, and skilful tactics made him at home in a parliamentary fight. "Cochrane is a large but not a big man," said a correspondent of the day, "full in the region of the vest, and wears his beard, which is coarse and sandy, trimmed short. His head is bald, and his countenance bold, and there are assurances in his complexion that he is a generous liver. He is a fair type of the fast man of intellect and culture, whose ambition is to figure in politics. He is in Congress and can command the ear of the House at any time. His great trouble is his Free-soil record. He took Free-soilism like a distemper and mounted the Buffalo platform. He is well over it now, however, with the exception of a single heresy—the homestead law. He is for giving homesteads to the actual settlers upon the public land."[4]

[3] "Though destitute of all literary furnishment, Richmond carried on his broad shoulders one of the clearest heads in the ranks of the Barnburners."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 183.

[4] M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 20.

Douglas had a majority of the delegates in the Charleston convention. But, with the aid of California and Oregon, the South had seventeen of the thirty-three States. This gave it a majority of the committee on resolutions, and, after five anxious days of protracted and earnest debate, that committee reported a platform declaring it the duty of the federal government to protect slavery in the territories, and denying the power of a territory either to abolish slavery or to destroy the rights of property in slaves by any legislation whatever. The minority reaffirmed the Cincinnati platform of 1856, with the following preamble and resolution: "Inasmuch as differences of opinion exist in the Democratic party as to the nature and extent of the powers of a territorial legislature, and as to the powers and duties of Congress over the institution of slavery within the territories; Resolved, that the Democratic party will abide by the decisions of the Supreme Court on the questions of constitutional law."

It was quickly evident that the disagreement which had plunged the committee into trouble extended to the convention. The debate became hot and bitter. In a speech of remarkable power, William L. Yancey of Alabama upbraided the Northern delegates for truckling to the Free-soil spirit. "You acknowledged," he said, "that slavery did not exist by the law of nature or by the law of God—that it only existed by state law; that it was wrong, but that you were not to blame. That was your position, and it was wrong. If you had taken the position directly that slavery was right . . . you would have triumphed. But you have gone down before the enemy so that they have put their foot upon your neck; you will go lower and lower still, unless you change front and change your tactics. When I was a schoolboy in the Northern States, abolitionists were pelted with rotten eggs. But now this band of abolitionists has spread and grown into three bands—the black Republican, the Free-soilers, and squatter sovereignty men—all representing the common sentiment that slavery is wrong."[5] Against this

[5] M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 48.

extreme Southern demand that Northern Democrats declare slavery right and its extension legitimate, Senator Pugh of Ohio vigorously protested. "Gentlemen of the South," he thundered, "you mistake us—you mistake us! we will not do it."[6]

The admission of the Softs and the adoption of a rule allowing individual delegates from uninstructed States to vote as they pleased had given the Douglas men an assured majority, and on the seventh day, when the substitution of the minority for the majority report by a vote of 165 to 138 threatened to culminate in the South's withdrawal, the Douglas leaders permitted a division of their report into its substantive propositions. Under this arrangement, the Cincinnati platform was reaffirmed by a vote of 237 1-2 to 65. The danger point had now been reached, and Edward Driggs of Brooklyn, scenting the brewing mischief, moved to table the balance of the report. Driggs favoured Douglas, but, in common with his delegation, he favoured a united party more, and could his motion have been carried at that moment with a show of unanimity, the subsequent secession might have been checked if not wholly avoided. The Douglas leaders, however, not yet sufficiently alarmed, thought the withdrawal of two or three Southern States might aid rather than hinder the nomination of their chief, and on this theory Driggs' motion was tabled. But, when Alabama, Arkansas, and Mississippi withdrew their votes, and nearly the entire South refused to express an opinion on the popular sovereignty plank, the extent of the secession suddenly flashed upon Richardson, who endeavoured to speak in the din of the wildest excitement. Richardson had withdrawn Douglas' name at the Cincinnati convention in 1856; and, thinking some way out of their present trouble might now be suggested by him, John Cochrane, in a voice as musical as it was far-reaching, urged the convention to hear one whom he believed brought another "peace offering;" but objection was made, and the roll call continued. Richardson's purpose, however, had not escaped the vigilant New Yorkers, who now retired for consultation.

[6] M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 50.

The question was, should they strike out the only resolution having the slightest significance in the minority report? By the time they had decided in the affirmative, and returned to the hall, the whole Douglas army was in full retreat, willing, finally, to stand solely upon the reaffirmation of the Cincinnati platform, where the Driggs motion would have landed them two hours earlier.

But the Douglas leaders were not yet satisfied. Writhing under their forced surrender, Stuart of Michigan took the floor, and by an inflammatory speech of the most offensive type started the stampede which the surrender of the Douglas platform was intended to avoid. Alabama led off, followed by Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, Florida, Texas, and Arkansas. Glenn of Mississippi, pale with emotion, spoke the sentiments of the seceders. "Our going," he said, "is not conceived in passion or carried out from mere caprice or disappointment. It is the firm resolve of the great body we represent. The people of Mississippi ask, what is the construction of the platform of 1856? You of the North say it means one thing; we of the South another. They ask which is right and which is wrong? The North have maintained their position, but, while doing so, they have not acknowledged the rights of the South. We say, go your way and we will go ours. But the South leaves not like Hagar, driven into the wilderness, friendless and alone, for in sixty days you will find a united South standing shoulder to shoulder."[7]

This declaration, spoken with piercing emphasis, was received with the most enthusiastic applause that had thus far marked the proceedings of the convention. "The South Carolinians cheered long and loud," says an eye-witness, "and the tempest of shouts made the circuit of the galleries and the floor several times before it subsided. A large number of ladies favoured the secessionists with their sweetest smiles and with an occasional clapping of hands."[8]

[7] M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 66.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

All this was telling hard upon the New York delegation.[9] It wanted harmony more than Douglas. Dickinson aspired to bring Southern friends to his support,[10] while Dean Richmond was believed secretly to indulge the hope that ultimately Horatio Seymour might be nominated; and, under the plausible and patriotic guise of harmonising the party, the delegation had laboured hard to secure a compromise. It was shown that Douglas need not be nominated; that with the South present he could not receive a two-thirds majority; that with another candidate the Southern States would continue in control. It was known that a majority of the delegation stood ready even to vote for a conciliatory resolution, a mild slave code plank, declaring that all citizens of the United States have an equal right to settle, with their property, in the territories, and that under the Supreme Court's decisions neither rights of person nor property could be destroyed or impaired by congressional or territorial legislation. This was Richmond's last card. In playing it he took desperate chances, but he was tired of the strain of maintaining the leadership of one faction, and of avoiding a total disruption with the other.

To the Southern extremists, marshalled by Mason and Slidell, the platform was of secondary importance. They wanted to destroy Guthrie, a personal enemy of Slidell, as well as to defeat Douglas, and, although it was apparent that the latter could not secure a two-thirds majority, it was no less evident that the Douglas vote could nominate Guthrie. To break up this combination, therefore, the ultras saw no

[9] "There was a Fourth of July feeling in Charleston that night—a jubilee. The public sentiment was overwhelmingly and enthusiastically in favour of the seceders. The Douglas men looked badly, as though they had been troubled with bad dreams. The disruption is too serious for them. They find themselves in the position of a semi-Free Soil sectional party, and the poor fellows take it hard. The ultra South sectionalists accuse them of cleaving unto heresies as bad as Sewardism."—M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 76.

[10] "Dickinson has ten votes in the New York delegation and no more."—New York *Tribune's* report from Charleston, April 24, 1860.

way open except to break up the convention on the question of a platform. This phase of the case left Richmond absolutely helpless. The secession of the cotton States might weaken Douglas, but it could in nowise aid the chances of a compromise candidate, since the latter, if nominated, must rely upon a large portion of the Douglas vote.

But Dean Richmond did not lose sight of his ultimate purpose. The secession left the convention with 253 out of 304 votes; and a motion requiring a candidate to obtain two-thirds of the original number became a test of devotion to Douglas, who hoped to get two-thirds of the remaining votes, but who could not, under any circumstances, receive two-thirds of the original number. As New York's vote was now decisive, it put the responsibility directly upon Richmond. It was his opportunity to help or to break Douglas. The claim that precedent required two-thirds of the electoral vote to nominate was rejected by Stuart as not having the sanction of logic. "Two-thirds of the vote given in this convention" was the language of the rule, he argued, and it could not mean two-thirds of all the votes originally in the convention. Cushing admitted that a rigid construction of the rule seemed to refer to the votes cast on the ballot in this convention, but "the chair is not of the opinion," he said, "that the words of the rule apply to the votes cast for the candidate, but to two-thirds of all the votes to be cast by the convention." This ruling in nowise influenced the solid delegations of Douglas' devoted followers from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota; and if Richmond had been as loyal in his support, it was reasoned, New York would have followed the Northwestern States. But Cushing's ruling afforded Richmond a technical peg upon which to hang a reason for not deliberately and decisively cutting off the Empire State from the possibilities of a presidential nomination, and, apparently without any scruples whatever, he decided that the nominee must receive the equivalent of two-thirds of the electoral college.[11] After

[11] "The drill of the New York delegation and its united vote

that vote one can no more think of Richmond or the majority of his delegation as inspired with devoted loyalty to Douglas. One delegate declared that it sounded like clods falling upon the Little Giant's coffin.[12]

Little enthusiasm developed over the naming of candidates. Six were placed in nomination—Douglas of Illinois, Guthrie of Kentucky, Hunter of Virginia, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, Lane of Oregon, and Dickinson of New York. George W. Patrick of California named Dickinson, and on the first ballot he received two votes from Pennsylvania, one from Virginia, and four from California, while New York cast its thirty-five votes for Douglas with as much éclat as if it had not just made his nomination absolutely impossible.[13] The result gave Douglas 145 1-2 to 107 1-2 for all others, with 202 necessary to a choice. On the thirty-third ballot, Douglas, amidst some enthusiasm, reached 152 1-2 votes, equivalent to a majority of the electoral college; but, as the balloting proceeded, it became manifest that this was his limit, and on the ninth day motions to adjourn to New York or Baltimore in June became frequent. The fifty-seventh ballot, the last of the session, gave Douglas 151 1-2, Guthrie 65 1-2, Dickinson 4, and all others 31. Dickinson had flickered between half a vote and sixteen, with an average of five. Never perhaps in the history of political conventions did an ambitious candidate keep so far from the goal of success.

It was now apparent that the convention could not longer survive. The listless delegates, the absence of enthusiasm, and the uncrowded galleries, showed that all hope of a nomination was abandoned, especially since the friends of Douglas, who could prevent the selection of another, declared that the Illinoisan would not withdraw under any contingency.

created a murmur of applause at its steady and commanding front."—New York *Tribune*, June 19, 1860.

[12] M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 85.

[13] "After the vote of New York had decided that it was impossible to nominate Douglas, it proceeded, the roll of States being called, to vote for him as demurely as if it meant it."—M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 84.

It is dreary reading, the record of the last three days. If any further evidence were needed to show the utter collapse of the dwindling, discouraged convention, the dejected, despairing appearance of Richardson, until now supported by a bright heroism and cheery good humour, would have furnished it. Accordingly, on the tenth day of the session, it was agreed to reassemble at Baltimore on Monday, June 18. Meantime the seceders had formed themselves into a convention, adopted the platform recently reported by the majority, and adjourned to meet at Richmond on the same day.

Bitter thoughts filled the home-going delegates. Douglas' Northwestern friends talked rancorously of the South; while, in their bitterness, Yancey and his followers exulted in the defeat of the Illinois Senator. "Men will be cutting one another's throats in a little while," said Alexander H. Stephens. "In less than twelve months we shall be in war, and that the bloodiest in history. Men seem to be utterly blinded to the future."[14]

"Do you not think matters may be adjusted at Baltimore?" asked R. M. Johnston. "Not the slightest chance of it," was the reply. "The party is split forever. Douglas will not retire from the stand he has taken. The only hope was at Charleston. If the party would be satisfied with the Cincinnati platform and would cordially nominate Douglas, we should carry the election; but I repeat to you that is impossible."[15]

Between the conventions the controversy moved to the floor of the United States Senate. "We claim protection for slavery in the territories," said Jefferson Davis, "first, because it is our right; secondly, because it is the duty of the general government."[16] In replying to Davis several days later, Douglas said: "My name never would have been presented at Charleston except for the attempt to proscribe me as a heretic, too unsound to be the chairman of a committee in this body, where I have held a seat for so many years without a suspicion resting on my political fidelity. I was

[14] James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 453.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 455. [16] *Ibid.*, p. 453.

forced to allow my name to go there in self-defence; and I will now say that had any gentleman, friend or foe, received a majority of that convention over me the lightning would have carried a message withdrawing my name."[17]

A few days afterward Davis referred to the matter again. "I have a declining respect for platforms," he said. "I would sooner have an honest man on any sort of a rickety platform you could construct than to have a man I did not trust on the best platform which could be made." This stung Douglas. "If the platform is not a matter of much consequence," he demanded, "why press that question to the disruption of the party? Why did you not tell us in the beginning of this debate that the whole fight was against the man and not upon the platform?"[18]

These personalities served to deepen the exasperation of the sections. The real strain was to come, and there was great need that cool heads and impersonal argument should prevail over misrepresentation and passion. But the coming event threw its shadow before it.

[17] James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 455.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 456.

CHAPTER XXI

SEWARD DEFEATED AT CHICAGO

1860

The Republican national convention met at Chicago on May 16. It was the prototype of the modern convention. In 1856, an ordinary hall in Philadelphia, with a seating capacity of two thousand, sufficed to accommodate delegates and spectators, but in 1860 the large building, called a "wigwam," specially erected for the occasion and capable of holding ten thousand, could not receive one-half the people seeking admission, while marching clubs, bands of music, and spacious headquarters for state delegations, marked the new order of things. As usual in later years, New York made an imposing demonstration. The friends of Seward took an entire hotel, and an organised, well-drilled body of men from New York City, under the lead of Tom Hyer, a noted pugilist, headed by a gaily uniformed band, paraded the streets amidst admiring crowds. For the first time, too, office-seekers were present in force at a Republican convention; and, to show their devotion, they packed hotel corridors and the convention hall itself with bodies of men who vociferously cheered every mention of their candidate's name. Such tactics are well understood and expected nowadays, but in 1860 they were unique.

The convention, consisting of 466 delegates, represented one southern, five border, and eighteen free States. "As long as conventions shall be held," wrote Horace Greeley, "I believe no abler, wiser, more unselfish body of delegates will ever be assembled than that which met at Chicago."[1] Gov-

[1] New York *Tribune*, June 2, 1860.

ernor Morgan, as chairman of the Republican national committee, called the convention to order, presenting David Wilmot, author of the famous proviso, for temporary chairman. George Ashmun of Massachusetts, the favourite friend of Webster, became permanent president. The platform, adopted by a unanimous vote on the second day, denounced the Harper's Ferry invasion "as among the gravest of crimes;" declared the doctrine of popular sovereignty "a deception and fraud;" condemned the attempt of President Buchanan to force the Lecompton Constitution upon Kansas; denied "the authority of Congress, of a territorial legislature, or of an individual to give legal existence to slavery in any territory;" demanded a liberal homestead law; and favoured a tariff "to encourage the development of the industrial interests of the whole country." The significant silence as to personal liberty bills, the Dred Scott decision, the fugitive slave law, and the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, evidenced the handiwork of practical men.

Only one incident disclosed the enthusiasm of delegates for the doctrine which affirms the equality and defines the rights of man. Joshua R. Giddings sought to incorporate the sentiment that "all men are created free and equal," but the convention declined to accept it until the eloquence of George William Curtis carried it amidst deafening applause. It was not an easy triumph. Party leaders had preserved the platform from radical utterances; and, with one disapproving yell, the convention tabled the Giddings amendment. Instantly Curtis renewed the motion; and when it drowned his voice, he stood with folded arms and waited. At last, the chairman's gavel gave him another chance. In the calm, his musical voice, in tones that penetrated and thrilled, begged the representatives of the party of freedom "to think well before, upon the free prairies of the West, in the summer of 1860, you dare to shrink from repeating the words of the great men of 1776."[2] The audience, stirred by an unwonted emotion, applauded the sentiment, and then adopted the

[2] M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 137.

amendment with a shout more unanimous than had been the vote of disapproval.

The selection of a candidate for President occupied the third day. Friends of Seward who thronged the city exhibited absolute confidence.[3] They represented not only the discipline of the machine, with its well-drilled cohorts, called the "irrepressibles," and its impressive marching clubs, gay with banners and badges, but the ablest leaders on the floor of the convention. And back of all, stood Thurlow Weed, the matchless manager, whose adroitness and wisdom had been crowned with success for a whole generation. "He is one of the most remarkable men of our time," wrote Samuel Bowles, in the preceding February. "He is cool, calculating, a man of expedients, who boasts that for thirty years he had not in political affairs let his heart outweigh his judgment." Governor Edwin D. Morgan and Henry J. Raymond were his lieutenants, William M. Evarts, his floor manager, and a score of men whose names were soon to become famous acted as his assistants. The brilliant rhetoric of George William Curtis, when insisting upon an indorsement of the Declaration of Independence, gave the opposition a taste of their mettle.

Seward, confident of the nomination, had sailed for Europe in May, 1859, in a happy frame of mind. The only serious opposition had come from the *Tribune* and from the Keystone State; but on the eve of his departure Simon Cameron assured him of Pennsylvania, and Greeley, apparently reconciled, had dined with him at the Astor House. "The sky is bright, and the waters are calm," was the farewell to his

[3] "Mr. Seward seemed to be certain of receiving the nomination at Chicago. He felt that it belonged to him. His flatterers had encouraged him in the error that he was the sole creator of the Republican party."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 214. "I hear of so many fickle and timid friends as almost to make me sorry that I have ever attempted to organise a party to save my country." Letter of W. H. Seward to his wife, May 2, 1860.—F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 448.

wife.[4] After his return there came an occasional shadow. "I hear of so many fickle and timid friends," he wrote;[5] yet he had confidence in Greeley, who, while calling with Weed, exhibited such friendly interest that Seward afterward resented the suggestion of his disloyalty.[6] On reaching Auburn to await the action of the convention, his confidence of success found expression in the belief that he would not again return to Congress during that session. As the work of the convention progressed his friends became more sanguine. The solid delegations of New York, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, California, and Kansas, supplemented by the expected votes of New England and other States on a second roll call, made the nomination certain. Edward Bates had Missouri, Delaware, and Oregon, but their votes barely equalled one-half of New York's; Lincoln was positively sure of only Illinois, and several of its delegates preferred Seward; Chase had failed to secure the united support of Ohio, and Dayton in New Jersey was without hope. Cameron held Pennsylvania in reversion for the New York Senator. So

[4] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 360.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 448.

[6] "Mr. Julius Wood of Columbus, O., an old and true friend of Mr. Weed, met Mr. Seward in Washington, and reiterated his fears in connection with the accumulation of candidates. 'Mr. Lincoln was brought to New York to divide your strength,' he said. But Mr. Seward was not disconcerted by these warnings. Less than a fortnight afterwards Mr. Wood was at the Astor House, where he again met Mr. Weed and Mr. Seward. Sunday afternoon Mr. Greeley visited the hotel and passing through one of the corridors met Mr. Wood, with whom he began conversation. 'We shan't nominate Seward,' said Mr. Greeley, 'we'll take some more conservative man, like Pitt Fessenden or Bates.' Immediately afterwards Mr. Wood went to Mr. Seward's room. 'Greeley has just been here with Weed,' said Mr. Seward. 'Weed brought him up here. You were wrong in what you said to me at Washington about Greeley; he is all right.' 'No, I was not wrong,' insisted Mr. Wood. 'Greeley is cheating you. He will go to Chicago and work against you.' At this Mr. Seward smiled. 'My dear Wood,' said he, 'your zeal sometimes gets a little the better of your judgment.'"—Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 269.

hopeless did the success of the opposition appear at midnight of the second day, that Greeley telegraphed the *Tribune* predicting Seward's nomination, and the "irrepressibles" anticipated victory in three hundred bottles of champagne. As late as the morning of the third day, the confidence of the Seward managers impelled them to ask whom the opposition preferred for Vice President.

But opponents had been industriously at work. They found that Republicans of Know-Nothing antecedents, especially in Pennsylvania, still disliked Seward's opposition to their Order, and that conservative Republicans recoiled from his doctrine of the higher law and the irrepressible conflict. Upon this broad foundation of unrest, the opposition adroitly builded, poisoning the minds of unsettled delegates with stories of his political methods and too close association with Thurlow Weed. No one questioned Seward's personal integrity; but the distrust of the political boss existed then as much as now, and his methods were no less objectionable. "The misconstruction put on his phrase 'the irrepressible conflict between freedom and slavery' has, I think, damaged him a good deal," wrote William Cullen Bryant, "and in this city there is one thing which has damaged him still more. I mean the project of Thurlow Weed to give charters for a set of city railways, for which those who receive them are to furnish a fund of from four to six hundred thousand dollars, to be expended for the Republican cause in the next presidential election."[7] Such a scheme would be rebuked even in this day of trust and corporation giving. People resented the transfer to Washington of the peculiar state of things at Albany, and when James S. Pike wrote of Seward's close connection with men who schemed for public grants, it recalled his belief in the adage that "Money makes the mare go." Allusion to Seward's "bad associates," as Bryant called them, and to the connection between "Seward stock" and "New York street railroads" had become frequent in the correspondence of leading men, and now, when delegates could talk face to face

[7] Parke Godwin, *Life of William Cullen Bryant*, Vol. 2, p. 127.

in the confidence of the party council chamber, these accusations made a profound impression. The presence of Tom Hyer and his rough marchers did not tend to eliminate these moral objections. "If you do not nominate Seward, where will you get your money?" was their stock argument.[8]

Horace Greeley, sitting as a delegate from Oregon, stayed with the friends of Bates and Lincoln at the Tremont Hotel. The announcement startled the New Yorkers. He had visited Weed at Albany on his way to Chicago, leaving the impression that he would support Seward,[9] but once in the convention city his disaffection became quickly known. Of all the members of the convention none attracted more attention, or had greater influence with the New England and Western delegates. His peculiar head and dress quickly identified him as he passed through the hotel corridors from delegation to delegation, and whenever he stopped to speak, an eager crowd of listeners heard his reasons why Seward could not carry the doubtful States. He marshalled all the facts and forgot no accusing rumour. His remarkable letter of 1854, dissolving the firm of Weed, Seward, and Greeley, had not then been published, leaving him in the position of a patriot and prophet who opposed the Senator because he sincerely believed him a weak candidate. "If we have ever demurred

[8] Horace Greeley, New York *Tribune*, May 22, 1860.

[9] "At this time there was friendly intercourse between Mr. Greeley and Mr. Weed, nor did anybody suppose that Mr. Greeley was not on good terms with Governor Seward. He had, indeed, in 1854, written to Mr. Seward a remarkable letter, 'dissolving the firm of Seward, Weed & Greeley,' but Mr. Weed had never seen such a letter, nor did Mr. Greeley appear to remember its existence. Mr. Weed and Mr. Greeley met frequently in New York, not with all of the old cordiality, perhaps, but still they had by no means quarrelled. Mr. Greeley wrote often to Mr. Weed, in the old way, and he and his family were visitors at Mr. Weed's house. Indeed—though that seems impossible—Mr. Greeley stopped at Mr. Weed's house, in Albany, on his way West, before the Chicago convention, and made a friendly visit of a day or so, leaving the impression that he was going to support Mr. Seward when he reached Chicago."—Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 268.

to his nomination," he said in the *Tribune* of April 23, in reply to the *Times'* charge of hostility, "it has been on the ground of his too near approximation in principle and sentiment to our standard to be a safe candidate just yet. We joyfully believe that the country is acquiring a just and adequate conception of the malign influence exerted by the slave power upon its character, its reputation, its treatment of its neighbour, and all its great moral and material interests. In a few years more we believe it will be ready to elect as its President a man who not only sees but proclaims the whole truth in this respect—in short, such a man as Governor Seward. We have certainly doubted its being yet so far advanced in its political education as to be ready to choose for President one who looks the slave oligarchy square in the eye and says, 'Know me as your enemy.'"

Greeley favoured Bates of Missouri, but was ready to support anybody to beat Seward. Bryant, disliking what he called the "pliant politics" of the New York Senator, had been disposed to favour Chase until the Cooper Institute speech. Lincoln left a similar trail of friends through New England. The Illinoisan's title of "Honest Old Abe," given him by his neighbours, contrasted favourably with the whispered reports of "bad associates" and the "New York City railroad scheme." Gradually, even the radical element in the unpledged delegations began questioning the advisability of the New Yorker's selection, and when, on the night preceding the nomination, Andrew Curtin of Pennsylvania and Henry S. Lane[10] of Indiana, candidates for governor in their respective States, whose defeat in October would probably bring

[10] "I was with my husband in Chicago, and may tell you now, as most of the actors have joined the 'silent majority,' what no living person knows, that Thurlow Weed, in his anxiety for the success of Seward, took Mr. Lane out one evening and pleaded with him to lead the Indiana delegation over to Seward, saying they would send enough money from New York to insure his election for governor, and carry the State later for the New York candidate." Letter of Mrs. Henry S. Lane, September 16, 1891.—Alex. K. McClure, *Lincoln and Men of War Times*, p. 25, *note*.

defeat in November, declared that Seward's selection would cost them their election, the opposition occupied good vantage ground. David Davis, the Illinois manager for Lincoln, against the positive instructions of his principal, strengthened these declarations by promising to locate Simon Cameron and Caleb B. Smith in the Cabinet. The next morning, however, the anti-Seward forces entered the convention without having concentrated upon a candidate. Lincoln had won Indiana, but Pennsylvania and Ohio were divided; New Jersey stood for Dayton; Bates still controlled Missouri, Delaware, and Oregon.

William M. Evarts presented Seward's name amidst loud applause. But at the mention of Lincoln's the vigour of the cheers surprised the delegates. The Illinois managers had cunningly filled the desirable seats with their shouters, excluding Tom Hyer and his marchers, who arrived too late, so that, although the applause for Seward was "frantic, shrill, and wild," says one correspondent, the cheers for Lincoln were "louder and more terrible."[11] Whether this had the influence ascribed to it at the time by Henry J. Raymond and others has been seriously questioned, but it undoubtedly aided in fixing the wavering delegates, and in encouraging the friends of other candidates to rally about the Lincoln standard.

The first roll call proved a disappointment to Seward. Though the pledged States were in line, New England fell short, Pennsylvania showed indifference, and Virginia created a profound surprise. Nevertheless, the confidence of the Seward forces remained unshaken. Of the 465 votes, Seward had 173 1-2, Lincoln 102, Cameron 50 1-2, Chase 49, and Bates 48, with 42 for seven others; necessary to a choice, 233. On the second ballot Seward gained four votes from New Jersey, two each from Texas and Kentucky, and one each from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Nebraska—making a total of 184 1-2. Lincoln moved up to 133. The action of Ohio in giving fourteen votes to Lincoln had been no less

[11] M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 145.

disappointing to the Seward managers than the transfer of Vermont's vote to the same column; but, before they could recover from this shock, Cameron was withdrawn and 48 votes from Pennsylvania carried Lincoln's total to 181.

The announcement of this change brought the convention to its feet amid scenes of wild excitement. Seward's forces endeavoured to avert the danger, but the arguments of a week were bearing fruit. As the third roll call proceeded, the scattering votes turned to Lincoln. Seward lost four from Rhode Island and half a vote from Pennsylvania, giving him 180, Lincoln 231 1-2, Chase 24 1-2, Bates 22, and 7 for three others. At this moment, an Ohio delegate authorised a change of four votes from Chase to Lincoln, and instantly one hundred guns, fired from the top of an adjoining building, announced the nomination of "Honest Old Abe." In a short speech of rare felicity and great strength, William M. Evarts moved to make the nomination unanimous.

The New York delegation, stunned by the result, declined the honour of naming a candidate for Vice President; and, on reassembling in the afternoon, the convention nominated Hannibal Hamlin of Maine. As Evarts was leaving the wigwam he remarked, with characteristic humour: "Well, Curtis, at least we have saved the Declaration of Independence!"

Three days after the nomination Greeley wrote James S. Pike: "Massachusetts was right in Weed's hands, contrary to all reasonable expectation. It was all we could do to hold Vermont by the most desperate exertions; and I at some times despaired of it. The rest of New England was pretty sound, but part of New Jersey was somehow inclined to sin against the light and knowledge. If you had seen the Pennsylvania delegation, and known how much money Weed had in hand, you would not have believed we could do so well as we did. Give Curtin thanks for that. Ohio looked very bad, yet turned out well, and Virginia had been regularly sold out; but the seller could not deliver. We had to rain red-hot bolts on them, however, to keep the majority from going for Seward, who got eight votes here as it was. Indiana was our

right bower, and Missouri above praise. It was a fearful week, such as I hope and trust I shall never see repeated."[12] That Greeley received credit for all he did is evidenced by a letter from John D. Defrees, then a leading politician of Indiana, addressed to Schuyler Colfax. "Greeley slaughtered Seward and saved the party," he wrote. "He deserves the praises of all men and gets them now. Wherever he goes he is greeted with cheers."[13]

The profound sorrow of Seward's friends resembled the distress of Henry Clay's supporters in 1840. It was not chagrin; it was not the selfish fear that considers the loss of office or spoils; it was not discouragement or despair. Apprehensions for the future of the party and the country there may have been, but their grief found its fountain-head in the feeling that "his fidelity to the country, the Constitution and the laws," as Evarts put it; "his fidelity to the party, and the principle that the majority govern; his interest in the advancement of our party to victory, that our country may rise to its true glory,"[14] had led to his sacrifice solely for assumed availability. The belief obtained that a large majority of the delegates preferred him, and that had the convention met elsewhere he would probably have been successful. In his *Life of Lincoln,* Alex. K. McClure of Pennsylvania, an anti-Seward delegate, says that "of the two hundred and thirty-one men who voted for Lincoln on the third and last ballot, not less than one hundred of them voted reluctantly against the candidate of their choice."[15]

At Auburn a funeral gloom settled upon the town.[16] Ad-

[12] James S. Pike, *First Blows of the Civil War,* p. 519.

[13] Hollister, *Life of Colfax,* p. 148.

[14] William M. Evarts' speech making Lincoln's nomination unanimous. F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward,* Vol. 2, p. 451.

[15] Alex. K. McClure, *Life of Lincoln,* p. 171.

[16] "On the day the convention was to ballot for a candidate, Cayuga County poured itself into Auburn. The streets were full, and Mr. Seward's house and grounds overflowed with his admirers. Flags were ready to be raised and a loaded cannon was placed at the gate whose pillars bore up two guardian lions. Arrangements had been perfected for the receipt of intelligence. At Mr. Seward's

miration for Seward's great ability, and a just pride in the exalted position he occupied in his party and before the country, had long ago displaced the local spirit that refused him a seat in the constitutional convention of 1846; and after the defeat his fellow townsmen could not be comforted. Sincere sorrow filled their hearts. But Seward's bearing was heroic. When told that no Republican could be found to write a paragraph for the evening paper announcing and approving the nominations, he quickly penned a dozen lines eulogistic of the convention and its work. To Weed, who shed bitter tears, he wrote consolingly. "I wish I were sure that your sense of disappointment is as light as my own," he said. "It ought to be equally so, if we have been equally thoughtful and zealous for friends, party, and country. I know not what has been left undone that could have been done, or done that ought to be regretted."[17] During the week many friends from distant parts of the State called upon him, "not to console," as they expressed it, "but to be consoled." His cheerful demeanour under a disappointment so overwhelming to everybody else excited the inquiry how he could exhibit such control. His reply was characteristic. "For twenty years," he said, "I have been breasting a daily

right hand, just within the porch, stood his trusty henchman, Christopher Morgan. The rider of a galloping steed dashed through the crowd with a telegram and handed it to Seward, who passed it to Morgan. For Seward, it read, 173½; for Lincoln, 102. Morgan repeated it to the multitude, who cheered vehemently. Then came the tidings of the second ballot: For Seward, 184½—for Lincoln, 181. 'I shall be nominated on the next ballot,' said Seward, and the throng in the house applauded, and those on the lawn and in the street echoed the cheers. The next messenger lashed his horse into a run. The telegram read, 'Lincoln nominated. T. W.' Seward turned as pale as ashes. The sad tidings crept through the vast concourse. The flags were furled, the cannon was rolled away, and Cayuga County went home with a clouded brow. Mr. Seward retired to rest at a late hour, and the night breeze in the tall trees sighed a requiem over the blighted hopes of New York's eminent son."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, pp. 215-16.

[17] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 453.

storm of censure. Now, all the world seems disposed to speak kindly of me. In that pile of papers, Republican and Democratic, you will find hardly one unkind word. When I went to market this morning I confess I was unprepared for so much real grief as I heard expressed at every corner."[18]

But deep in his heart despondency reigned supreme. "The reappearance at Washington in the character of a leader deposed by his own party, in the hour of organisation for decisive battle, thank God is past—and so the last of the humiliations has been endured," he wrote his wife. "Preston King met me at the depot and conveyed me to my home. It seemed sad and mournful. Dr. Nott's benevolent face, Lord Napier's complacent one, Jefferson's benignant one, and Lady Napier's loving one, seemed all like pictures of the dead. Even 'Napoleon at Fontainebleau' seemed more frightfully desolate than ever. At the Capitol the scene was entirely changed from my entrance into the chamber last winter. Cameron greeted me kindly; Wilkinson of Minnesota, and Sumner cordially and manfully. Other Republican senators came to me, but in a manner that showed a consciousness of embarrassment, which made the courtesy a conventional one; only Wilson came half a dozen times, and sat down by me. Mason, Gwin, Davis, and most of the Democrats, came to me with frank, open, sympathising words, thus showing that their past prejudices had been buried in the victory they had achieved over me. Good men came through the day to see me, and also this morning. Their eyes fill with tears, and they become speechless as they speak of what they call 'ingratitude.' They console themselves with the vain hope of a day of 'vindication,' and my letters all talk of the same thing. But they awaken no response in my heart. I have not shrunk from any fiery trial prepared for me by the enemies of my cause. But I shall not hold myself bound to try, a second time, the magnanimity of its friends."[19] To Weed he wrote: "Private life, as soon as I can reach it without grieving or

[18] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 453.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 454.

embarrassing my friends, will be welcome to me. It will come the 4th of next March in my case, and I am not unprepared."[20]

Defeat was a severe blow to Seward. For the moment he seemed well-nigh friendless. The letter to his wife after he reached Washington was a threnody. He was firmly convinced that he was a much injured man, and his attitude was that of the martyr supported by the serenity of the saint. But to the world he bore himself with the courage and the dignity that belong to one whose supremacy is due to superiority of talents. The country could not know that he was to become a secretary of state of whom the civilised world would take notice; but one of Seward's prescience must have felt well satisfied in his own mind, even when telling Weed how "welcome" private life would be, that, although he was not to become President, he was at the opening of a greater political career.

[20] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 270.

CHAPTER XXII

NEW YORK'S CONTROL AT BALTIMORE

1860

The recess between the Charleston and Baltimore conventions did not allay hostilities. Jefferson Davis' criticism and Douglas' tart retorts transferred the quarrel to the floor of the United States Senate, and by the time the delegates had reassembled at Baltimore on June 18, 1860, the factions exhibited greater exasperation than had been shown at Charleston. Yet the Douglas men seemed certain of success. Dean Richmond, it was said, had been engaged in private consultation with Douglas and his friends, pledging himself to stand by them to the last. On the other hand, rumours of a negotiation in which the Southerners and the Administration at Washington had offered the New Yorkers their whole strength for any man the Empire State might name other than Douglas and Guthrie, found ready belief among the Northwestern delegates. It was surmised, too, that the defeat of Seward at Chicago had strengthened the chances of Horatio Seymour, on the ground that the disappointed and discontented Seward Republicans would allow him to carry the State. Whatever truth there may have been in these reports, all admitted that the New York delegation had in its hands the destiny of the convention, if not that of the party itself.[1]

[1] "There was no question that the New York delegation had the fate of the convention in its keeping; and while it was understood that the strength of Douglas in the delegation had been increased during the recess by the Fowler defalcation (Fowler's substitute being reported a Douglas man) and by the appearance of regular delegates whose alternates had been against Douglas at Charleston, it was obvious that the action of the politicians of New York could not be counted upon in any direction with confidence. Rumours

The apparent breaking point at Charleston was the adoption of a platform; at Baltimore it was the readmission of seceding delegates. Florida, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Texas presented their original delegations, who sought immediate admission; but a resolution, introduced by Sanford E. Church of New York, referred them to the committee on credentials, with the understanding that persons accepting seats were bound in honour to abide the action of the convention. The Douglas men, greeting this resolution with tremendous applause, proposed driving it through without debate; but New York hesitated to order the previous question. Then it asked permission to withdraw for consultation, and when it finally voted in the negative, deeming it unwise to stifle debate, it revealed the fact that its action was decisive on all questions.

An amendment to the Church resolution proposed sending only contested seats to the credentials committee, without conditions as to loyalty, and over this joinder of issues some very remarkable speeches disclosed malignant bitterness rather than choice rhetoric. Richardson, still the recognised spokesman of Douglas, received marked attention as he argued boldly that the amendment admitted delegates not sent there, and decided a controversy without a hearing. "I do not propose," he said, "to sit side by side with delegates who do not represent the people; who are not bound by anything, when I am bound by everything. We are not so hard driven yet as to be compelled to elect delegates from States that do not choose to send any here."[2]

Russell of Virginia responded, declaring that his State

circulated that a negotiation had been carried on in Washington by the New Yorkers with the South, to sell out Douglas, the Southerners and the Administration offering their whole strength to any man New York might name, provided that State would slaughter Douglas. On the other hand, it appeared that Dean Richmond, the principal manager of the New Yorkers, had pledged himself, as solemnly as a politician could do, to stand by the cause of Douglas to the last."—M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 159.

[2] M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 167.

intended, in the interest of fair play, to cling to the Democracy of the South. "If we are to be constrained to silence," he vociferated, "I beg gentlemen to consider the silence of Virginia ominous. If we are not gentlemen—if we are such knaves that we cannot trust one another—we had better scatter at once, and cease to make any effort to bind each other."[3] Speaking on similar lines, Ewing of Tennessee asked what was meant. "Have you no enemy in front? Have you any States to spare? We are pursued by a remorseless enemy, and yet from all quarters of this convention come exclamations of bitterness and words that burn, with a view to open the breach in our ranks wider and wider, until at last, Curtius-like, we will be compelled to leap into it to close it up."

But it remained for Montgomery of Pennsylvania, in spite of Cochrane's conciliatory words, to raise the political atmosphere to the temperature at Charleston just before the secession. "For the first time in the history of the Democratic party," he said, "a number of delegations of sovereign States, by a solemn instrument in writing, resigned their places upon the floor of the convention. They went out with a protest, not against a candidate, but against the principles of a party, declaring they did not hold and would not support them. And not only that, but they called a hostile convention, and sat side by side with us, deliberating upon a candidate and the adoption of a platform. Principles hostile to ours were asserted and a nomination hostile to ours was threatened. Our convention was compelled to adjourn in order to have these sovereign States represented. What became of the gentlemen who seceded? They adjourned to meet at Richmond. Now they seek to come back and sit upon this floor with us, and to-day they threaten us if we do not come to their terms. God knows I love the star spangled banner of my country, and it is because I love the Union that I am determined that any man who arrays himself in hostility to it shall not, with my consent, take a seat in this convention. I am opposed to secession either from this Union or from the

[3] M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 168.

Democratic convention, and when men declare the principles of the party are not their principles, and that they will neither support them nor stay in a convention that promulgates them, then I say it is high time, if they ask to come back, that they shall declare they have changed their minds."[4]

This swung the door of vituperative debate wide open, and after an adjournment had closed it in the hall, the crowds continued it in the street. At midnight, while Yancey made one of his silver-toned speeches, which appears, by all accounts, to have been a piece of genuine eloquence, the friends of Douglas, on the opposite side of Monument Square, kept the bands playing and crowds cheering.

When the convention assembled on the second day, Church, in the interest of harmony, withdrew the last clause of his resolution, and, without a dissenting voice, all contested seats went to the committee on credentials. Then the convention impatiently waited three days for a report, while the night meetings, growing noisier and more arrogant, served to increase the bitterness. The Douglasites denounced their opponents as "disorganisers and disunionists;" the Southerners retorted by calling them "a species of sneaking abolitionists." Yancey spoke of them as small men, with selfish aims. "They are ostrich-like—their head is in the sand of squatter sovereignty, and they do not know their great, ugly, ragged abolition body is exposed."

On the fourth day, the committee presented two reports, the majority, without argument, admitting the contestants—the minority, in a remarkably strong document of singular skill and great clearness, seating the seceders on the ground that their withdrawal was not a resignation and was not so considered by the convention. A resignation, it argued, must be made to the appointing power. The withdrawing delegates desired the instruction of their constituencies, who authorised them in every case except South Carolina to repair to Baltimore and endeavour once more to unite their party

[4] M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, pp. 168-171.

and promote harmony and peace in the great cause of their country.

This report made a profound impression upon the convention, and the motion to substitute it for the majority report at once threw New York into confusion. That delegation had already decided to sustain the majority, but the views of the seceders, so ably and logically presented, had reopened the door of debate, and a resolute minority, combining more than a proportionate share of the talent and worth of the delegation, insisted upon further time. After the convention had grudgingly taken a recess to accommodate the New Yorkers, William H. Ludlow reappeared and apologised for asking more time. This created the impression that Richmond's delegation, at the last moment, proposed to slaughter Douglas[5] as it did at Charleston, and the latter's friends, maddened and disheartened over what they called "New York's dishonest and cowardly procrastination," would gladly have prevented an adjournment. But the Empire State held the key to the situation. Without it Douglas could get nothing and in a hopeless sort of way his backers granted Ludlow's request.[6]

The situation of the New York delegation was undoubtedly most embarrassing. Their admission to the Charleston convention had depended upon the Douglas vote, but their hope of success hinged upon harmony with the cotton States. A formidable minority favoured the readmission of the seceders and the abandonment of Douglas regardless of their obligation. This was not the policy of Dean Richmond, who was

[5] M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 185.

[6] "The *real* business transacting behind the scenes has been the squelching of Douglas, which is understood to be as good as bargained for. The South is in due time to concentrate on a candidate—probably Horatio Seymour of our own State—and then New York is to desert Douglas for her own favourite son. Such is the programme as it stood up to last evening."—New York *Tribune* (editorial), June 20, 1860. "There are plenty of rumours, but nothing has really form and body unless it be a plan to have Virginia bring forward Horatio Seymour, whom New York will then diffidently accept in place of Douglas."—*Ibid.* (telegraphic report).

the pivotal personage. His plan included the union of the party by admitting the seceders, and the nomination of Horatio Seymour with the consent of the Northwest, after rendering the selection of Douglas impossible. It was a brilliant programme, but the inexorable demand of the Douglas men presented a fatal drawback. Richmond implored and pleaded. He knew the hostility of the Douglasites could make Seymour's nomination impossible, and he knew, also, that a refusal to admit the seceders would lead to a second secession, a second ticket, and a hopelessly divided party. Nevertheless, the Douglas men were remorseless.[7] Even Douglas' letter, sent Richardson on the third day, and his dispatch to Dean Richmond,[8] received on the fifth day, authorising the withdrawal of his name if it could be done without sacrificing the principle of non-intervention, did not relieve the situation. Rule or ruin was now their motto, as much as it was the South's, and between them Richmond's diplomatic resistance,[9] which once seemed of iron, became as clay. Neverthe-

[7] "The Soft leaders still shiver on the brink of a decision. But a new light broke on them yesterday, when they discovered that, if they killed Douglas, his friends were able and resolved to kill Seymour in turn."—New York *Tribune* (editorial), June 21. "The action of New York is still a subject of great doubt and anxiety. As it goes so goes the party and the Union of course."—*Ibid.* (telegraphic report).

[8] "A dispatch from Douglas to Richmond was sent because a letter containing similar suggestions to Richardson had been kept in the latter's pocket. But Richmond suppressed the dispatch as Richardson had suppressed the letter."—M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 195. "Richardson afterward explained that the action of the Southerners had put it out of his power to use Douglas' letter."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 415.

[9] "It was asserted in Baltimore and believed in political circles that New York offered to reconsider her vote on the Louisiana case, and make up the convention out of the original materials, with the exception of the Alabama delegation. It could not agree to admit Yancey & Co. But the seceders and their friends would not hear to any such proposition. They scorned all compromise."—M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 195. "Many were

less, Richmond's control of the New York delegation remained unbroken. The minority tried new arguments, planned new combinations, and racked their brains for new devices, but when Richmond finally gave up the hopeless and thankless task of harmonising the Douglasites and seceders, a vote of 27 to 43 forced the minority of the delegation into submission by the screw of the Syracuse unit rule, and New York finally sustained the majority report.

After this, the convention became the theatre of a dramatic event which made it, for the moment, the centre of interest to the political world. The majority report seated the Douglas faction from Alabama and Louisiana, and then excluded William L. Yancey, a representative seceder, and let in Pierre Soulé, a representative Douglasite. It is sufficient proof of the sensitiveness of the relations between the two factions that an expressed preference for one of these men should again disrupt the convention, but the moving cause was far deeper than the majority's action. Yancey belonged to the daring, resolute, and unscrupulous band of men who, under the unhappy conditions that threatened their defeat, had already decided upon disunion; and, when the convention repudiated him, the lesser lights played their part. Virginia led a new secession, followed by most of the delegates from North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Maryland, and finally by Caleb Cushing himself, the astute presiding officer, whose action anticipated the withdrawal of Massachusetts.

When they were gone, Pierre Soulé took the floor and made the speech of the convention, fascinating all who saw and heard. An eye-witness speaks of his rolling, glittering, eagle eye, Napoleonic head and face, sharp voice with a margin of French accent, and piercing, intense earnestness of manner. "I have not been at all discouraged," he said, "by the

the expedients devised to bring about harmony; but it was to attempt the impossible. The Southerners were exacting, the delegates from the Northwest bold and defiant."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 474.

emotion which has been attempted to be created in this body by those who have seceded from it. We from the furthest South were prepared; we had heard the rumours which were to be initiatory of the exit which you have witnessed on this day, and we knew that conspiracy, which had been brooding for months past, would break out on this occasion, and for the purposes which are obvious to every member. Sirs, there are in political life men who were once honoured by popular favour, who consider that the favour has become to them an inalienable property, and who cling to it as to something that can no longer be wrested from their hands—political fossils so much incrusted in office that there is hardly any power that can extract them. They saw that the popular voice was already manifesting to this glorious nation who was to be her next ruler. Instead of bringing a candidate to oppose him; instead of creating issues upon which the choice of the nation could be enlightened; instead of principles discussed, what have we seen? An unrelenting war against the individual presumed to be the favourite of the nation! a war waged by an army of unprincipled and unscrupulous politicians, leagued with a power which could not be exerted on their side without disgracing itself and disgracing the nation." Secession, he declared, meant disunion, "but the people of the South will not respond to the call of the secessionists."[10]

The effect of Soulé's speech greatly animated and reassured the friends of Douglas, who now received 173 1-2 of the 190 1-2 votes cast. Dickinson got half a vote from Virginia, and Horatio Seymour one vote from Pennsylvania. At the mention of the latter's name, David P. Bissell of Utica promptly withdrew it upon the authority of a letter, in which Seymour briefly but positively declared that under no circumstances could he be a candidate for President or Vice President. On the second ballot, Douglas received all the votes but thirteen. This was not two-thirds of the original vote, but, in spite of the resolution which Dean Richmond

[10] M. Halstead, *National Political Conventions of 1860*, p. 207.

passed at Charleston, Douglas was declared, amidst great enthusiasm, the nominee of the convention, since two-thirds of the delegates present had voted for him. Benjamin Fitzpatrick, United States senator from Alabama, was then nominated for Vice President. When he afterwards declined, the national committee appointed Herschel V. Johnson of Georgia in his place.

Meantime the Baltimore seceders, joined by their seceding colleagues from Charleston, met elsewhere in the city, adopted the Richmond platform, and nominated John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky for President, and Joseph Lane of Oregon for Vice President. A few days later the Richmond convention indorsed these nominations.

After the return of the New York delegation, the gagged minority, through the lips of Daniel S. Dickinson, told the story of the majority's purpose at Charleston and Baltimore. Dickinson was not depressed or abashed by his failure; neither was he a man to be rudely snuffed out or bottled up; and, although his speech at the Cooper Institute mass-meeting, called to ratify the Breckenridge and Lane ticket, revealed a vision clouded with passion and prejudice, it clearly disclosed the minority's estimate of the cardinal object of Dean Richmond's majority. "Waiving all questions of the merits or demerits of Mr. Douglas as a candidate," he said, his silken white hair bringing into greater prominence the lines of a handsome face, "his pretensions were pressed upon the convention in a tone and temper, and with a dogged and obstinate persistence, which was well calculated, if it was not intended, to break up the convention, or force it into obedience to the behests of a combination. The authors of this outrage, who are justly and directly chargeable with it, were the ruling majority of the New York delegation. They held the balance of power, and madly and selfishly and corruptly used it for the disruption of the Democratic party in endeavouring to force it to subserve their infamous schemes. They were charged with high responsibilities in a crisis of unusual interest in our history, and in an evil moment their leprous

hands held the destinies of a noble party. They proclaimed personally and through their accredited organs that the Southern States were entitled to name a candidate, but from the moment they entered the convention at Charleston until it was finally broken up at Baltimore by their base conduct and worse faith, their every act was to oppose any candidate who would be acceptable to those States.

"Those who controlled the New York delegation through the fraudulent process of a unit vote—a rule forced upon a large minority to stifle their sentiments—will hereafter be known as political gamblers. The Democratic party of New York, founded in the spirit of Jefferson, has, in the hands of these gamblers, been disgraced by practices which would dishonour a Peter Funk cast-off clothing resort; cheating the people of the State, cheating a great and confiding party, cheating the convention which admitted them to seats, cheating delegations who trusted them, cheating everybody with whom they came in contact, and then lamenting from day to day, through their accredited organ, that the convention had not remained together so that they might finally have cheated Douglas. Political gamblers! You have perpetrated your last cheat—consummated your last fraud upon the Democratic party. Henceforth you will be held and treated as political outlaws. There is no fox so crafty but his hide finally goes to the hatter."[11]

In his political controversies, Dickinson acted on the principle that an opponent is necessarily a blockhead or a scoundrel. But there was little or no truth in his severe arraignment. Richmond's purpose was plainly to nominate Horatio Seymour if it could be done with the consent of the Northwestern States, and his sudden affection for a two-thirds rule came from a determination to prolong the convention until it yielded consent. At no time did he intend leaving Douglas for any one other than Seymour. On the other hand, Dickinson had always favoured slavery.[12] Neither

[11] New York *Tribune*, July 19, 1860.

[12] "The obduracy, the consistency of Mr. Dickinson's Democracy

the Wilmot Proviso nor the repeal of the Missouri Compromise disturbed him. What slavery demanded he granted; what freedom sought he denounced. His belief that the South would support him for a compromise candidate in return for his fidelity became an hallucination. It showed itself at Cincinnati in 1852 when he antagonised Marcy; and his position in 1860 was even less advantageous. Nevertheless, Dickinson nursed his delusion until the guns at Fort Sumter disclosed the real design of Yancey and the men in whom he had confided.

are of the most marked type. Ever since he changed his vote from Van Buren to Polk, with such hearty alacrity in the Baltimore convention of 1844, he has promptly yielded to every requisition which the Southern Democracy has made upon their Northern allies. All along through the stormy years when the star of the Wilmot Proviso was in the ascendant, and when Wright and Dix bowed to the gale, and even Marcy and Bronson bent before it, Dickinson, on the floor of the Senate, stood erect and immovable."—New York *Tribune*, July 4, 1860.

CHAPTER XXIII

RAYMOND, GREELEY, AND WEED

1860

It was impossible that the defeat of Seward at Chicago, so unexpected, and so far-reaching in its effect, should be encountered without some attempt to fix the responsibility. To Thurlow Weed's sorrow[1] was added the mortification of defeat. He had staked everything upon success, and, although he doubtless wished to avoid any unseemly demonstration of disappointment, the rankling wound goaded him into a desire to relieve himself of any lack of precaution. Henry J. Raymond scarcely divided the responsibility of management; but his newspaper, which had spoken for Seward, shared in the loss of prestige, while the *Tribune,* his great rival in metropolitan journalism, disclosed between the lines of assumed modesty an exultant attitude.

Greeley had played a very important part in the historic convention. The press gave him full credit for his activity,

[1] "Mr. Weed was for a time completely unnerved by the result. He even shed tears over the defeat of his old friend."—Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed,* Vol. 2, p. 271.

"After the joy of Lincoln's nomination had subsided," wrote Leonard Swett of Chicago, "Judge Davis and I called upon Mr. Weed. This was the first time either of us had met him. He did not talk angrily as to the result, nor did he complain of any one. Confessing with much feeling to the great disappointment of his life, he said, 'I hoped to make my friend, Mr. Seward, President, and I thought I could serve my country in so doing.' He was a larger man intellectually than I anticipated, and of finer fibre. There was in him an element of gentleness and a large humanity which won me, and I was pleased no less than surprised."—*Ibid.,* Vol. 2, p. 292.

and he admitted it in his jubilant letter to Pike; but after returning to New York he seemed to think it wise to minimise his influence, claiming that the result would have been the same had he remained at home. "The fact that the four conspicuous doubtful States of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Illinois," he wrote, "unanimously testified that they could not be carried for Seward was decisive. Against this Malakoff the most brilliant evolutions of political strategy could not avail."[2] This two-column article, modestly concealing his own work, might not have led to an editorial war between the three great Republican editors of the State, had not Greeley, in the exordium of a speech, published in the *Tribune* of May 23, exceeded the limits of human endurance. "The past is dead," he said. "Let the dead past bury it, and let the mourners, if they will, go about the streets."

The exultant sentences exasperated Raymond, who held the opinion which generally obtained among New York Republican leaders, that Greeley's persistent hostility was not only responsible for Seward's defeat, but that under the guise of loyalty to the party's highest interests he had been insidious and revengeful, and Raymond believed it needed only a bold and loud-spoken accusation against him to fill the mind of the public with his guilt. In this spirit he wrote a stinging reply. "With the generosity which belongs to his nature, and which a feeling not unlike remorse may have stimulated into unwonted activity," said this American Junius, "Mr. Greeley awards to others the credit which belongs transcendently to himself. The main work of the Chicago convention was the defeat of Governor Seward, and in that endeavour Mr. Greeley laboured harder, and did tenfold more, than the whole family of Blairs, together with all the gubernatorial candidates, to whom he modestly hands over the honours of the effective campaign. Mr. Greeley had special qualifications, as well as a special love, for this task. For twenty years he had been sustaining the political principles and vindicating the political conduct of Mr. Seward

[2] New York *Tribune*, May 22, 1860.

through the columns of the most influential political newspaper in the country. His voice was potential precisely where Governor Seward was strongest, because it was supposed to be that of a friend, strong in his personal attachment and devotion, and driven into opposition on this occasion solely by the despairing conviction that the welfare of the country and the triumph of the Republican cause demanded the sacrifice. For more than six months Mr. Greeley had been preparing the way for this consummation. He was in Chicago several days before the meeting of the convention and he devoted every hour of the interval to the most steady and relentless prosecution of the main business which took him thither.

"While it was known to some that nearly six years ago he had privately, but distinctly, repudiated all further political friendship for and alliance with Governor Seward, for the avowed reason that Governor Seward had never aided or advised his elevation to office, no use was made of this knowledge in quarters where it would have disarmed the deadly effect of his pretended friendship for the man upon whom he was thus deliberately wreaking the long hoarded revenge of a disappointed office-seeker. . . . Being thus stimulated by a hatred he had secretly cherished for years, protected by the forbearance of those whom he assailed, and strong in the confidence of those upon whom he sought to operate, it is not strange that Mr. Greeley's efforts should have been crowned with success. But it is perfectly safe to say that no other man—certainly no one occupying a position less favourable for such an assault—could possibly have accomplished that result."[3]

Raymond's letter produced a profound impression. It excited the astonishment and incredulity of every one. He had made a distinct charge that Greeley's opposition was the revenge of a disappointed office-seeker, and the public, resenting the imputation, demanded the evidence. Greeley himself echoed the prayer by a blast from his silver trumpet which added to the interest as well as to the excitement. "This

[3] New York *Times*, May 25, 1860.

carefully drawn indictment," he said, "contains a very artful mixture of truth and misrepresentation. No intelligent reader of the *Tribune* has for months been left in doubt of the fact that I deemed the nomination of Governor Seward for President at this time unwise and unsafe; and none can fail to understand that I did my best at Chicago to prevent that nomination. My account of 'Last Week at Chicago' is explicit on that point. True, I do not believe my influence was so controlling as the defeated are disposed to represent it, but this is not material to the issue. It is agreed that I did what I could.

"It is not true—it is grossly untrue—that at Chicago I commended myself to the confidence of delegates 'by professions of regard and the most zealous friendship for Governor Seward, but presented defeat, *even in New York*, as the inevitable result of his nomination.' The very reverse of this is the truth. I made no professions before the nomination, as I have uttered no lamentations since. It was the simple duty of each delegate to do just whatever was best for the Republican cause, regardless of personal considerations. And this is exactly what I did. . . . As to New York, I think I was at least a hundred times asked whether Governor Seward could carry this State;[1] and I am sure I uniformly responded affirmatively, urging delegates to consider the New York delegation the highest authority on that point as I was strenuously urging that the delegations from Pennsylvania,

[1] "At Chicago, Seward encountered the opposition from his own State of such powerful leaders as Greeley, Dudley Field, Bryant, and Wadsworth. The first two were on the ground and very busy. The two latter sent pungent letters that were circulated among the delegates from the various States. The main point of the attack was that Seward could not carry New York. Soon after the adjournment of the convention, William Curtis Noyes, a delegate, told me that a careful canvass of the New York delegation showed that nearly one-fourth of its members believed it was extremely doubtful if Seward could obtain a majority at the polls in that State."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, pp. 214-15. "Perhaps the main stumbling block over which he fell in the convention was Thurlow Weed."—*Ibid.*, p. 215.

New Jersey, Indiana, and Illinois must be regarded as authority as to who could and who could not carry their respective States.

"Mr. Raymond proceeds to state that I had, 'in November, 1854, privately but distinctly repudiated all further political friendship for and alliance with Governor Seward, and menaced him with hostility wherever it could be made most effective; for the avowed reason that Governor Seward had never advised my elevation to office,' &c. This is a very grave charge, and, being dated 'Auburn, Tuesday, May 22, 1860,' and written by one who was there expressly and avowedly to console with Governor Seward on his defeat and denounce me as its author, it is impossible not to see that Governor Seward is its responsible source. I, therefore, call on him for the private letter which I did write him in November, 1854, that I may print it verbatim in the *Tribune,* and let every reader judge how far it sustains the charges which his mouthpiece bases thereon. I maintain that it does not sustain them; but I have no copy of the letter, and I cannot discuss its contents while it remains in the hands of my adversaries, to be used at their discretion. I leave to others all judgment as to the unauthorised use which has already been made of this private and confidential letter, only remarking that this is by no means the first time it has been employed to like purpose. I have heard of its contents being dispensed to members of Congress from Governor Seward's dinner-table; I have seen articles based on it paraded in the columns of such devoted champions of Governor Seward's principles and aims as the Boston *Courier.* It is fit that the New York *Times* should follow in their footsteps; but I, who am thus fired on from an ambush, demand that the letter shall no longer be thus employed. Let me have the letter and it shall appear verbatim in every edition of the *Tribune.* Meantime, I only say that, when I fully decided that I would no longer be devoted to Governor Seward's personal fortunes, it seemed due to candour and fair dealing that I should privately but in all frankness apprise him of

the fact. It was not possible that I could in any way be profited by writing that letter; I well understood that it involved an abdication of all hopes of political advancement; yet it seemed due to my own character that the letter should be written. Of course I never dreamed that it could be published, or used as it already has been; but no matter—let us have the letter in print, and let the public judge between its writer and his open and covert assailants. At all events I ask no favour and fear no open hostility.

"There are those who will at all events believe that my opposition to Governor Seward's nomination was impelled by personal considerations; and among these I should expect to find the Hon. Henry J. Raymond. With these I have no time for controversy; in their eyes I desire no vindication. But there is another and far larger class who will realise that the obstacles to Governor Seward's election were in no degree of my creation, and that their removal was utterly beyond my powers. The whole course of the *Tribune* has tended to facilitate the elevation to the Presidency of a statesman cherishing the pronounced anti-slavery views of Governor Seward; it is only on questions of finance and public economy that there has been any perceptible divergence between us. Those anti-democratic voters of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Indiana, and Illinois, who could not be induced to vote for Governor Seward, have derived their notions of him in some measure from the *Times*, but in no measure from the *Tribune*. The delegations from those States, with the candidates for governor in Pennsylvania and Indiana, whose representations and remonstrances rendered the nomination of Governor Seward, in the eyes of all intelligent, impartial observers, a clear act of political suicide, were nowise instructed or impelled by me. They acted on views deliberately formed long before they came to Chicago. It is not my part to vindicate them; but whoever says they were influenced by me, other than I was by them, does them the grossest injustice.

"I wished first of all to succeed; next, to strengthen and

establish our struggling brethren in the border slave States. If it had seemed to me possible to obtain one more vote in the doubtful States for Governor Seward than for any one else, I should have struggled for him as ardently as I did against him, even though I had known that the Raymonds who hang about our party were to be his trusted counsellors and I inflexibly shut out from his confidence and favour. If there be any who do not believe this, I neither desire their friendship nor deprecate their hostility."[5]

Greeley's demand for his letter did not meet with swift response. It was made on June 2. When Seward passed through New York on his way to Washington on the 8th, a friend of Greeley waited upon him, but he had nothing for the *Tribune*. Days multiplied into a week, and still nothing came. Finally, on June 13, Greeley received it through the hands of Thurlow Weed and published it on the 14th. It bore date "New York, Saturday evening, November 11, 1854," and was addressed simply to "Governor Seward." Its great length consigned it to nonpareil in strange contrast to the long primer type of the editorial page, but its publication became the sensation of the hour. To this day its fine thought-shading is regarded the best illustration of Greeley's matchless prose.

"The election is over," he says, "and its results sufficiently ascertained. It seems to me a fitting time to announce to you the dissolution of the political firm of Seward, Weed & Greeley, by the withdrawal of the junior partner—said withdrawal to take effect on the morning after the first Tuesday in February next. And, as it may seem a great presumption in me to assume that any such firm exists, especially since the public was advised, rather more than a year ago, by an editorial rescript in the *Evening Journal*, formally reading me out of the Whig party, that I was esteemed no longer either useful or ornamental in the concern, you will, I am sure, indulge me in some reminscences which seem to befit the occasion.

[5] New York *Tribune*, June 2, 1860.

"I was a poor young printer and editor of a literary journal—a very active and bitter Whig in a small way, but not seeking to be known out of my own ward committee—when, after the great political revulsion of 1837, I was one day called to the City Hotel, where two strangers introduced themselves as Thurlow Weed and Lewis Benedict, of Albany. They told me that a cheap campaign paper of a peculiar stamp at Albany had been resolved on, and that I had been selected to edit it. The announcement might well be deemed flattering by one who had never even sought the notice of the great, and who was not known as a partisan writer, and I eagerly embraced their proposals. They asked me to fix my salary for the year; I named $1,000, which they agreed to; and I did the work required to the best of my ability. It was work that made no figure and created no sensation; but I loved it and did it well. When it was done you were Governor, dispensing offices worth $3000 to $20,000 per year to your friends and compatriots, and I returned to my garret and my crust, and my desperate battle with pecuniary obligations heaped upon me by bad partners in business and the disastrous events of 1837. I believe it did not then occur to me that some of these abundant places might have been offered to me without injustice; I now think it should have occurred to you. If it did occur to me, I was not the man to ask you for it; I think that should not have been necessary. I only remember that no friend at Albany inquired as to my pecuniary circumstances; that your friend (but not mine), Robert C. Wetmore, was one of the chief dispensers of your patronage here; and that such devoted compatriots as A. H. Wells and John Hooks were lifted by you out of pauperism into independence, as I am glad I was not; and yet an inquiry from you as to my needs and means at that time would have been timely, and held ever in grateful remembrance.

"In the Harrison campaign of 1840 I was again designated to edit a campaign paper. I published it as well, and ought to have made something by it, in spite of its extremely

low price; my extreme poverty was the main reason why I did not. It compelled me to hire presswork, mailing, etc., done by the job, and high charges for extra work nearly ate me up. At the close I was still without property and in debt, but this paper had rather improved my position.

"Now came the great scramble of the swell mob of coon minstrels and cider suckers at Washington—I not being counted in. Several regiments of them went on from this city; but no one of the whole crowd—though I say it who should not—had done so much toward General Harrison's nomination and election as yours respectfully. I asked nothing, expected nothing; *but you,* Governor Seward, *ought to have asked that I be postmaster of New York.* Your asking would have been in vain; but it would have been an act of grace neither wasted nor undeserved.

"I soon after started the *Tribune,* because I was urged to do so by certain of your friends, and because such a paper was needed here. I was promised certain pecuniary aid in so doing; it might have been given me without cost or risk to any one. All I ever had was a loan by piecemeal of $1000, from James Coggeshall. God bless his honoured memory! I did not ask for this, and I think it is the one sole case in which I ever received a pecuniary favour from a political associate. I am very thankful that he did not die till it was fully repaid.

"And let me here honour one grateful recollection. When the Whig party under your rule had offices to give, my name was never thought of; but when in '42-'43, we were hopelessly out of power, I was honoured with the nomination for state printer. When we came again to have a state printer to elect, as well as nominate, the place went to Weed, as it ought. Yet it was worth something to know that there was once a time when it was not deemed too great a sacrifice to recognise me as belonging to your household. If a new office had not since been created on purpose to give its valuable patronage to H. J. Raymond and enable St. John to show

forth his *Times* as the organ of the Whig state administration, I should have been still more grateful.

"In 1848 your star again rose, and my warmest hopes were realised in your election to the Senate. I was no longer needy, and had no more claim than desire to be recognised by General Taylor. I think I had some claim to forbearance from you. What I received thereupon was a most humiliating lecture in the shape of a decision in the libel case of Redfield and Pringle, and an obligation to publish it in my own and the other journal of our supposed firm. I thought and still think this lecture needlessly cruel and mortifying. The plaintiffs, after using my columns to the extent of their needs or desires, stopped writing and called on me for the name of their assailant. I proffered it to them—a thoroughly responsible man. They refused to accept it unless it should prove to be one of the four or five first men in Batavia!—when they had known from the first who it was, and that it was neither of them. They would not accept that which they had demanded; they sued me instead for money, and money you were at liberty to give them to their heart's content. I do not think you *were* at liberty to humiliate me in the eyes of my own and your public as you did. I think you exalted your own judicial sternness and fearlessness unduly at my expense. I think you had a better occasion for the display of these qualities when Webb threw himself entirely upon you for a pardon which he had done all a man could do to demerit. His paper is paying you for it now.

"I have publicly set forth my view of your and our duty with respect to fusion, Nebraska, and party designations. I will not repeat any of that. I have referred also to Weed's reading me out of the Whig party—my crime being, in this as in some other things, that of doing to-day what more politic persons will not be ready to do till to-morrow.

"Let me speak of the late canvass. I was once sent to Congress for ninety days merely to enable Jim Brooks to secure a seat therein for four years. *I think I never hinted to any human being that I would have liked to be put forward for*

any place. But James W. White (you hardly know how good and true a man he is) started my name for Congress, and Brooks' packed delegation thought I could help him through; so I was put on behind him. But this last spring, after the Nebraska question had created a new state of things at the North, one or two personal friends, of no political consideration, suggested my name as a candidate for governor, and I did not discourage them. Soon, the persons who were afterward mainly instrumental in nominating Clark came about me, and asked if I could secure the Know-Nothing vote. I told them I neither could nor would touch it; on the contrary, I loathed and repelled it. Thereupon they turned upon Clark.

"I said nothing, did nothing. A hundred people asked me who should be run for governor. I sometimes indicated Patterson; I never hinted at my own name. But by and by Weed came down, and called me to him, to tell me why he could not support me for governor. I had never asked nor counted on his support.

"I am sure Weed did not mean to humiliate me; but he did it. The upshot of his discourse (very cautiously stated) was this: If I were a candidate for governor, I should beat not myself only, but you. Perhaps that was true. But as I had in no manner solicited his or your support, I thought this might have been said to my friends rather than to me. I suspect it is true that I could not have been elected governor as a Whig. But had he and you been favourable, there would have been a party in the State ere this which could and would have elected me to *any* post, without injuring itself or endangering your re-election.

"It was in vain that I urged that I had in no manner asked a nomination. At length I was nettled by his language—well intended, but *very* cutting as addressed by him to me—to say, in substance, 'Well, then, make Patterson governor, and try my name for lieutenant. To lose this place is a matter of no importance; and we can see whether I am really so odious.'

"I should have hated to serve as lieutenant-governor, but I should have gloried in running for the post. I want to have my enemies all upon me at once; am tired of fighting them piecemeal. And, though I should have been beaten in the canvass, I know that my running would have helped the ticket, and helped my paper.

"It was thought best to let the matter take another course. No other name could have been put on the ticket so bitterly humbling to me as that which was selected. The nomination was given to Raymond; the fight left to me. And, Governor Seward, *I have made it,* though it be conceited in me to say so. Even Weed has not been (I speak of his paper) hearty in this contest, while the journal of the Whig lieutenant-governor has taken care of its own interests and let the canvass take care of itself, as it early declared it would do. That journal has (because of its milk-and-water course) some twenty thousand subscribers in this city and its suburbs, and of these twenty thousand, I venture to say more voted for Ullman and Scroggs than for Clark and Raymond; the *Tribune* (also because of its character) has but eight thousand subscribers within the same radius, and I venture to say that of its habitual readers, nine-tenths voted for Clark and Raymond—very few for Ullman and Scroggs. I had to bear the brunt of the contest. . . .

"Governor Seward, I know that some of your most cherished friends think me a great obstacle to your advancement; that John Schoolcraft, for one, insists that you and Weed should not be identified with me. I trust, after a time, you will not be. I trust I shall never be found in opposition to you; I have no further wish than to glide out of the newspaper world as quietly and as speedily as possible, join my family in Europe, and, if possible, stay there quite a time—long enough to cool my fevered brain and renovate my overtasked energies. All I ask is that we shall be counted even on the morning after the first Tuesday in February, as aforesaid, and that I may thereafter take such course as seems best without reference to the past.

"You have done me acts of valued kindness in the line of your profession; let me close with the assurance that these will ever be gratefully remembered by Yours, Horace Greeley."[6]

At the time Seward received this letter he regarded it as only a passing cloud-shadow. "To-day I have a long letter from Greeley, full of sharp, pricking thorns," he wrote Weed. "I judge, as we might indeed well know from his nobleness of disposition, that he has no idea of saying or doing anything wrong or unkind; but it is sad to see him so unhappy. Will there be a vacancy in the Board of Regents this winter? Could one be made at the close of the session? Could he have it? Raymond's nomination and election is hard for him to bear."[7] Two or three weeks later, after a call at the *Tribune* office, Seward again wrote Weed, suggesting that "Greeley's despondency is overwhelming, and seems to be aggravated by the loss of subscribers. But below this is chagrin at the failure to obtain official position."[8] With such inquiries and comments Seward put the famous letter away.[9]

Its publication did not accomplish all that Raymond expected. People were amazed, and deep in their hearts many persons felt that Greeley had been treated unfairly. The inquiry as to a vacancy in the Board of Regents showed that Seward himself shared this opinion at the time. But the question that most interested the public in 1860 was, why, if

[6] New York *Tribune*, June 14, 1860.

[7] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 239.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 240.

[9] "My personal relations with Governor Seward were wholly unchanged by this letter. We met frequently and cordially after it was written, and we very freely conferred and co-operated during the long struggle in Congress for Kansas and Free Labour. He understood as well as I did that my position with regard to him, though more independent than it had been, was nowise hostile, and that I was as ready to support his advancement as that of any other statesman, whenever my judgment should tell me that the public good required it. I was not his adversary, but my own and my country's freeman."—Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life*, p. 321.

Greeley had declared war upon Seward in 1854, did not Weed make it known in time to destroy the influence of the man who had "deliberately wreaked the long-hoarded revenge of a disappointed office-seeker?" This question reflected upon Weed's management of Seward's campaign, and to avoid the criticism he claimed to have been "in blissful ignorance of its contents." This seems almost impossible. But in explaining the groundlessness of Greeley's complaints, Weed wrote an editorial, the dignity and patriotism of which contrasted favourably with Greeley's self-seeking.

"There are some things in this letter," wrote the editor of the *Evening Journal,* "requiring explanation—all things in it, indeed, are susceptible of explanations consistent with Governor Seward's full appreciation of Mr. Greeley's friendship and services. The letter was evidently written under a morbid state of feeling, and it is less a matter of surprise that such a letter was thus written, than that its writer should not only cherish the ill-will that prompted it for six years, but allow it to influence his action upon a question which concerns his party and his country.

"Mr. Greeley's first complaint is that this journal, in an 'editorial rescript formally read him out of the Whig party.' Now, here is the 'editorial rescript formally reading' Mr. Greeley out of the Whig party, taken from the *Evening Journal* of September 6, 1853:

" 'The *Tribune* defines its position in reference to the approaching election. Regarding the "Maine law" as a question of paramount importance, it will support members of the legislature friendly to its passage, irrespective of party. For state officers it will support such men as it deems competent and trustworthy, irrespective also of party, and without regard to the "Maine law." In a word, it avows itself, for the present, if not forever, an independent journal (it was pretty much so always), discarding party usages, mandates, and platforms.

" 'We regret to lose, in the *Tribune,* an old, able, and effi-

cient co-labourer in the Whig vineyard. But when carried away by its convictions of duty to other, and, in its judgment, higher and more beneficent objects, we have as little right as inclination to complain. The *Tribune* takes with it, wherever it goes, an indomitable and powerful pen, a devoted, a noble, and an unselfish zeal. Its senior editor evidently supposes himself permanently divorced from the Whig party, but we shall be disappointed if, after a year or two's sturdy pulling at the oar of reform, he does not return to his long-cherished belief that great and beneficent aims must continue, as they commenced, to be wrought out through Whig instrumentalities.

" 'But we only intended to say that the *Tribune* openly and frankly avows its intention and policy; and that in things about which we cannot agree, we can and will disagree as friends.'

"Pray read this article again, if its purpose and import be not clearly understood! At the time it appeared, the *Tribune* was under high pressure 'Maine law' speed. That question, in Mr. Greeley's view, was paramount to all others. It was the *Tribune's* 'higher law.' Mr. Greeley had given warning in his paper that he should support 'Maine law' candidates for the legislature, and for state offices, regardless of their political or party principles and character. And this, too, when senators to be elected had to choose a senator in Congress. But instead of 'reading' Mr. Greeley 'out of the Whig party,' it will be seen that after Mr. Greeley had read himself out of the party by discarding 'party usages, mandates, and platforms,' the *Evening Journal,* in the language and spirit of friendship, predicted just what happened, namely, that, in due time, Mr. Greeley would 'return to his long-cherished belief that great and beneficent aims must continue, as they commenced, to be wrought out through Whig instrumentalities.'

"We submit, even to Mr. Greeley himself, whether there is one word or thought in the article to which he referred

justifying his accusation that he had been 'read out of the Whig party' by the *Evening Journal.*

"In December, 1837, when we sought the acquaintance and co-operation of Mr. Greeley, we were, like him, a 'poor printer,' working as hard as he worked. We had then been sole editor, reporter, news collector, 'remarkable accident,' 'horrid murder,' 'items' man, etc., etc., for seven years, at a salary of $750, $1000, $1250, and $1500. We had also been working hard, for poor pay, as an editor and politician, for the twelve years preceding 1830. We stood, therefore, on the same footing with Mr. Greeley when the partnership was formed. We knew that Mr. Greeley was much abler, more indomitably industrious, and, as we believed, a better man in all respects. We foresaw for him a brilliant future; and, if we had not started with utterly erroneous views of his objects, we do not believe that our relations would have jarred. We believed him indifferent alike to the temptations of money and office, desiring only to become both 'useful' and 'ornamental,' as the editor of a patriotic, enlightened, leading, and influential public journal. For years, therefore, we placed Horace Greeley far above the 'swell mob' of office-seekers, for whom, in his letter, he expresses so much contempt. Had Governor Seward known, in 1838, that Mr. Greeley coveted an inspectorship, he certainly would have received it. Indeed, if our memory be not at fault, Mr. Greeley was offered the clerkship of the Assembly in 1838. It was certainly pressed upon us, and, though at that time, like Mr. Greeley, desperately poor, it was declined.

"We cannot think that Mr. Greeley's political friends, after the *Tribune* was under way, knew that he needed the 'pecuniary aid' which had been promised. When, about that period, we suggested to him (after consulting some of the board) that the printing of the common council might be obtained, he refused to have anything to do with it.

"In relation to the state printing, Mr. Greeley knows that there never was a day when, if he had chosen to come to Albany, he might not have taken whatever interest he pleased

in the *Journal* and its state printing. But he wisely regarded his position in New York, and the future of the *Tribune,* as far more desirable.

"For the 'creation of the new office for the *Times,*' Mr. Greeley knows perfectly well that Governor Seward was in no manner responsible.

"That Mr. Greeley should make the adjustment of the libel suit of Messrs. Redfield and Pringle against the *Tribune* a ground of accusation against Governor Seward is a matter of astonishment. Governor Seward undertook the settlement of that suit as the friend of Mr. Greeley, at a time when a systematic effort was being made to destroy both the *Tribune* and *Journal* by prosecutions for libel. We were literally plastered over with writs, declarations, etc. There were at least two judges of the Supreme Court in the State, on whom plaintiffs were at liberty to count for verdicts. Governor Seward tendered his professional services to Mr. Greeley, and in the case referred to, as in others, foiled the adversary. For such service this seems a strange requital. Less fortunate than the *Tribune,* it cost the *Journal* over $8000 to reach a point in legal proceedings that enabled a defendant in a libel suit to give the truth in evidence.

"It was by no fault or neglect or wish of Governor Seward that Mr. Greeley served but 'ninety days in Congress.' Nor will we say what others have said, that his congressional *début* was a failure. There were no other reasons, and this seems a fitting occasion to state them. Mr. Greeley's 'isms' were in his way at conventions. The sharp points and rough edges of the *Tribune* rendered him unacceptable to those who nominate candidates. This was more so formerly than at present, for most of the rampant reforms to which the *Tribune* was devoted have subsided. We had no sympathy with, and little respect for, a constituency that preferred 'Jim' Brooks to Horace Greeley.

"Nearly forty years of experience leaves us in some doubt whether, with political friends, an open, frank, and truthful, or a cautious, calculating, non-committal course is not the

right, but the easiest and most politic. The former, which we have chosen, has made us much trouble and many enemies. Few candidates are able to bear the truth, or to believe that the friend who utters it is truly one.

"In 1854, the *Tribune,* through years of earnest effort, had educated the people up to the point of demanding a 'Maine law' candidate for governor. But its followers would not accept their chief reformer! It was evident that the state convention was to be largely influenced by 'Maine law' and 'Choctaw' Know-Nothing delegates. It was equally evident that Mr. Greeley could neither be nominated nor elected. Hence the conference to which he refers. We found, as on two other occasions during thirty years, our state convention impracticable. We submitted the names of Lieutenant-Governor Patterson and Judge Harris (both temperance men in faith and practice) as candidates for governor, coupled with that of Mr. Greeley for lieutenant-governor. But the 'Maine law' men would have none of these, preferring Myron H. Clark (who used up the raw material of temperance), qualified by H. J. Raymond for lieutenant-governor.

"What Mr. Greeley says of the relative zeal and efficiency of the *Tribune* and *Times,* and of our own feelings in that contest, is true. We did our duty, but with less of enthusiasm than when we were supporting either Granger, Seward, Bradish, Hunt, Fish, King, or Morgan for governor.

"One word in relation to the supposed 'political firm.' Mr. Greeley brought into it his full quota of capital. But were there no beneficial results, no accruing advantages, to himself? Did he not attain, in the sixteen years, a high position, world-wide reputation, and an ample fortune? Admit, as we do, that he is not as wealthy as we wish he was, it is not because the *Tribune* has not made his fortune, but because he did not keep it—because it went, as other people's money goes, to friends, to pay indorsements, and in bad investments.

"We had both been liberally, nay, generously, sustained by our party. Mr. Greeley differs with us in regarding pat-

rons of newspapers as conferring favours. In giving them the worth of their money, he holds that the account is balanced. We, on the other hand, have ever held the relation of newspaper editor and subscriber as one of fraternity. Viewed in this aspect, the editors of the *Tribune* and *Evening Journal* have manifold reasons for cherishing grateful recollections of the liberal and abiding confidence and patronage of their party and friends.

"In conclusion, we cannot withhold an expression of sincere regret that this letter has been called out. After remaining six years in 'blissful ignorance' of its contents, we should have preferred to have ever remained so. It jars harshly upon cherished memories. It destroys ideals of disinterestedness and generosity which relieved political life from so much that is selfish, sordid, and rapacious."

Henry B. Stanton once asked Seward, directly, if he did not think it would have been better to let Greeley have office. "Mr. Seward looked at me intently, rolled out a cloud of tobacco smoke, and then slowly responded: 'I don't know but it would.' "[10] It is doubtful, however, if Seward ever forgave a New Yorker who contributed to his defeat. Lincoln spoke of him as "without gall," but Stanton declared him a good hater who lay in wait to punish his foes. Greeley, James S. Wadsworth, William Cullen Bryant, and David Dudley Field, conspicuously led the opposition, and if he failed to annihilate them all it is because some of them did not give him a chance to strike back. Greeley caught the first knockout blow in February, 1861; and in 1862, says Stanton, "he doubtless defeated James S. Wadsworth for governor of New York. Wadsworth, who was then military commander of Washington, told me that Seward was 'dead against him' all through the campaign."[11]

[10] H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, pp. 199, 200.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FIGHT OF THE FUSIONISTS

1860

After the return of the Softs from Baltimore the condition of the Democratic party became a subject of much anxiety. Dean Richmond's persistent use of the unit rule had driven the Hards into open rebellion, and at a great mass-meeting, held at Cooper Institute and addressed by Daniel S. Dickinson, it was agreed to hold a Breckenridge and Lane state convention at Syracuse on August 8. At the appointed time three hundred delegates appeared, representing every county, but with the notable exception of the chairman, Henry S. Randall, the biographer of Thomas Jefferson, who had advocated the Wilmot Proviso in 1847, written the Buffalo platform in 1848, and opposed the fugitive slave law in 1850, practically all of them had steadily opposed the Free-soil influences of their party. To many it seemed strange, if not absolutely ludicrous, to hoist a pro-slavery flag in the Empire State. But Republicans welcomed the division of their opponents, and the Hards were terribly in earnest. They organised with due formality; spent two days in conference; adopted the pro-slavery platform of the seceders' convention amidst loud cheering; selected candidates for a state and electoral ticket with the care that precedes certain election; angrily denounced the leadership of Dean Richmond at Charleston and Baltimore; appointed a new state committee, and, with the usual assurance of determined men, claimed a large following.

The indomitable Dickinson, in a speech not unlike his Cooper Institute address, declared that Breckenridge, the regularly nominated candidate of seventeen States and por-

tions of other States, would secure one hundred and twenty-seven electoral votes in the South and on the Pacific coast. This made the election, he argued, depend upon New York, and since Douglas would start without the hope of getting a single vote, it became the duty of every national Democrat to insist that the Illinoisan be withdrawn. People might scoff at this movement as "a cloud no bigger than a man's hand," he said, but it would grow in size and send forth a deluge that would refresh and purify the arid soil of politics. The applause that greeted this prophecy indicated faith in a principle that most people knew had outlived its day in the State; and, although Dickinson was always altogether on one side, it is scarcely credible that he could sincerely believe that New York would support Breckenridge, even if Douglas withdrew.

The Hards conjured with a few distinguished names which still gave them prestige. Charles O'Conor, Greene C. Bronson, and John A. Dix, as conservative, moderate leaders, undoubtedly had the confidence of many people, and their ticket, headed by James T. Brady, the brilliant lawyer, looked formidable. Personally, Brady was perhaps the most popular man in New York City; and had he stood upon other than a pro-slavery platform his support must have been generous. But the fact that he advocated the protection of slave property in the territories, although opposed to Buchanan's Lecompton policy, was destined to subject him to humiliating defeat.

The Softs met in convention on August 15. In numbers and noisy enthusiasm they did not seem to represent a larger following than the Hards, but their principles expressed the real sentiment of whatever was left of the rank and file of the Democratic party of the State. Horatio Seymour was the pivotal personage. Around him they rallied. The resolution indorsing Stephen A. Douglas and his doctrine of non-intervention very adroitly avoided quarrels. It accepted Fernando Wood's delegation on equal terms with Tammany; refused to notice the Hards' attack upon Dean Richmond and

the majority of the Charleston delegation; and nominated William Kelley of Hudson for governor by acclamation. Kelley was a large farmer of respectable character and talents, who had served with credit in the State Senate and supported Van Buren in 1848 with the warmth of a sincere Free-soiler. He was evidently a man without guile, and, although modest and plain-spoken, he knew what the farmer and workingman most wanted, and addressed himself to their best thought. It was generally conceded that he would poll the full strength of his party.

But the cleverest act of the convention was its fusion with the Constitutional Union party. In the preceding May, the old-line Whigs and Know-Nothings had met at Baltimore and nominated John Bell of Tennessee for President and Edward Everett of Massachusetts for Vice President, on the simple platform: "The Constitution of the country, the union of the States, and the enforcement of the laws." Washington Hunt, the former governor of New York, had become the convention's president, and, in company with James Brooks and William Duer, he had arranged with the Softs to place on the Douglas electoral ticket ten representatives of the Union party, with William Kent, the popular son of the distinguished Chancellor, at their head.

Hunt had become a thorn in the side of his old friends, now the leading Republican managers. He had joined them as a Whig in the thirties. After sending him to Congress for three terms and making him comptroller of state in 1848, they had elected him governor in 1850; but, in the division of the party, he joined the Silver-Grays, failed of re-election in 1852, dropped into the American party in 1854, and supported Fillmore in 1856. Thurlow Weed thought he ought to have aided them in the formation of the Republican party, and Horace Greeley occasionally reminded him that a decent regard for consistency should impel him to act in accordance with his anti-slavery record; but when, in 1860, Hunt began the crusade that successfully fused the Douglas and Bell tickets in New York, thus seriously endangering the election

of Abraham Lincoln, the Republican editors opened their batteries upon him with well-directed aim. In his one attempt to face these attacks, Hunt taunted Greeley with being "more dangerous to friend than to foe." To this the editor of the *Tribune* retorted: "When I was your friend, you were six times before the people as a candidate for most desirable offices, and in five of those six were successful, while you were repeatedly a candidate before and have been since, and always defeated. Possibly some have found me a dangerous friend, but you never did."[1]

Hunt's coalition movement, called the "Syracuse juggle" and the "confusion ticket," did not work as smoothly as he expected. It gave rise to a bitter controversy which at once impaired its value. The Bell negotiators declared that the ten electors, if chosen, would be free to vote for their own candidate, while the Douglas mediators stated with emphasis that each elector was not only pledged by the resolution of the convention to support Douglas, but was required to give his consent to do so or allow another to fill his place. "We cannot tell which answer is right," said the New York *Sun*, "but it looks as if there were deception practised." The *Tribune* presented the ridiculous phase of it when it declared that the Bell electors were put up to catch the Know-Nothings, while the others would trap the Irish and Germans. "Is this the way," it asked, referring to William Kent and his associates, "in which honourable men who have characters to support, conduct political contests?"[2] To dissipate the confusion, Hunt explained that the defeat of Lincoln would probably throw the election into Congress, in which event Bell would become President. "But we declare, with the same frankness, that if Douglas, and not Bell, shall become President, we will welcome that result as greatly preferable to the success of sectional candidates."[3]

The Republican state convention which met at Syracuse on August 22, did not muffle its enthusiasm over the

[1] New York *Tribune*, July 23, 1860.
[2] *Ibid.*, July 14, 1860. [3] *Ibid.*, July 24, 1860.

schism in the Democratic party. Seward and his friends had regained their composure. A midsummer trip to New England, chiefly for recreation, had brought great crowds about the Auburn statesmen wherever he appeared, and, encouraged by their enthusiastic devotion, he returned satisfied with the place he held in the hearts of Republicans. His followers, too, indicated their disappointment by no public word or sign. To the end of the convention its proceedings were marked by harmony and unanimity. Edwin D. Morgan was renominated for governor by acclamation; the platform of Chicago principles was adopted amidst prolonged cheers, and the selection of electors approved without dissent. The happy combination of the two electors-at-large, William Cullen Bryant and James O. Putnam, evidenced the spirit of loyalty to Abraham Lincoln that inspired all participants. Bryant had been an oracle of the radical democracy for more than twenty years, and had stubbornly opposed Seward; Putnam, a Whig of the school of Clay and Webster, had, until recently, zealously supported Millard Fillmore and the American party. In its eagerness to unite every phase of anti-slavery sentiment the convention buried the past in its desire to know, in the words of Seward, "whether this is a constitutional government under which we live."

During the campaign, Republican demonstrations glorified Lincoln's early occupation of rail-splitting, while the Wide-awakes, composed largely of young men who had studied the slavery question since 1852 solely as a moral issue, illuminated the night and aroused enthusiasm with their torches and expert marching. As early as in September, the New York *Herald* estimated that over four hundred thousand were already uniformed and drilled. In every town and village these organisations, unique then, although common enough nowadays, were conscious appeals for sympathy and favour, and undoubtedly contributed much to the result by enlisting the hearty support of first voters. Indeed, on the Republican side, it was largely a campaign of young men. "The Republican party," said Seward at Cleveland, "is a

party chiefly of young men. Each successive year brings into its ranks an increasing proportion of the young men of this country."[4]

Aside from the torch-light processions of the Wide-awakes, the almost numberless speeches were the feature of the canvass of 1860. There had, perhaps, been more exciting and enthusiastic campaigns, but the number of meetings was without precedent. The *Tribune* estimated that ten thousand set addresses were made in New York alone, and that the number in the country equalled all that had been made in previous presidential canvasses since 1789. It is likewise true that at no time in the history of the State did so many distinguished men take part in a campaign. Though the clergy were not so obtrusive as in 1856, Henry Ward Beecher and Edwin H. Chapin, the eminent Universalist, did not hesitate to deliver political sermons from their pulpits, closing their campaign on the Sunday evening before election.

But the New Yorker whom the Republican masses most desired to hear and see was William H. Seward. Accordingly, in the latter part of August he started on a five weeks' tour through the Western States, beginning at Detroit and closing at Cleveland. At every point where train or steamboat stopped, if only for fifteen minutes, thousands of people awaited his coming. The day he spoke in Chicago, it was estimated that two hundred thousand visitors came to that city. Rhodes suggests that "it was then he reached the climax of his career."[5]

Seward's speeches contained nothing new, and in substance they resembled one another. But in freshness of thought and kaleidoscopic phraseology, they were attractive, full of eloquence, and of statesmanlike comment, lifting the

[4] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 462. *Seward's Works*, Vol. 4, p. 384.

[5] "Seward filled the minds of Republicans, attracting such attention and honour, and arousing such enthusiasm, that the closing months of the campaign were the most brilliant epoch of his life. It was then he reached the climax of his career."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 493.

campaign, then just opening, upon a high plane of political and moral patriotism. He avoided all personalities; he indicated no disappointment;[6] his praise of Lincoln was in excellent taste; and without evasion or concealment, but with a ripeness of experience that had mellowed and enlightened him, he talked of "higher law" and the "irrepressible conflict" in terms that made men welcome rather than fear their discussion. "Let this battle be decided in favour of freedom in the territories," he declared, "and not one slave will ever be carried into the territories of the United States, and that will end the irrepressible conflict."[7]

The growth and resources of the great Northwest, whose development he attributed to the exclusion of slave labour, seemed to inspire him with the hope and faith of youth, and he spoke of its reservation for freedom and its settlement and upbuilding in the critical moment of the country's history as providential, since it must rally the free States of the Atlantic coast to call back the ancient principles which had been abandoned by the government to slavery. "We resign to you," he said, "the banner of human rights and human liberty on this continent, and we bid you be firm, bold, and onward, and then you may hope that we will be able to follow you." It was in one of these moments of exaltation when he seemed to be lifted into the higher domain of prophecy that he made the prediction afterward realised by the Alaska treaty. "Standing here and looking far off into the Northwest," he said, "I see the Russian as he busily occupies himself in establishing seaports and towns and fortifications on

[6] "Seward charged his defeat chiefly to Greeley. He felt toward that influential editor as much vindictiveness as was possible in a man of so amiable a nature. But he did not retire to his tent."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 494.

"The magnanimity of Mr. Seward, since the result of the convention was known," wrote James Russell Lowell, "has been a greater ornament to him and a greater honour to his party than his election to the Presidency would have been."—*Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1860: *Lowell's Political Essays*, p. 34.

[7] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, pp. 462-66.

the verge of this continent as the outposts of St. Petersburg, and I can say, 'Go on, and build up your outposts all along the coast, up even to the Arctic Ocean, for they will yet become the outposts of my own country—monuments of the civilisation of the United States in the Northwest."[8]

At the beginning of the canvass, Republican confidence and enthusiasm contrasted strangely with the apathy of the Democratic party, caused by its two tickets, two organisations, and two incompatible platforms. It was recognised early in the campaign that Douglas could carry no slave State unless it be Missouri; and, although the Douglas and Bell fusion awaked some hope, it was not until the fusion electoral ticket included supporters of Breckenridge that the struggle became vehement and energetic. New York's thirty-five votes were essential to the election of Lincoln, and early in September a determined effort began to unite the three parties against him. The Hards resisted the movement, but many merchants and capitalists of New York City, apprehensive of the dissolution of the Union if Lincoln were elected, and promising large sums of money to the campaign, forced the substitution of seven Breckenridge electors in place of as many Douglas supporters, giving Bell ten, Breckenridge seven, and Douglas eighteen. "It is understood," said the *Tribune,* "that four nabobs have already subscribed twenty-five thousand dollars each, and that one million is to be raised."[9]

All this disturbed Lincoln. "I think there will be the most extraordinary effort ever made to carry New York for Douglas," he wrote Weed on August 17. "You and all others who write me from your State think the effort cannot succeed, and I hope you are right. Still, it will require close watching and great efforts on the other side."[10] After fusion did succeed, the Republican managers found encouragement in the fact that a majority of the Americans in the western part

[8] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward,* Vol. 2, p. 464.
[9] New York *Tribune,* October 19, 1860.
[10] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed,* Vol. 2, p. 297.

of the State,[11] following the lead of Putnam, belonged to the party of Lincoln, while the Germans gave comforting evidence of their support. On his return from the West Seward assured Lincoln "that this State will redeem all the pledges we have made."[12] Then came the October verdict from Pennsylvania and Indiana. "Emancipation or revolution is now upon us," said the Charleston *Mercury*.[13] Yet the hope of the New York fusionists, encouraged by a stock panic in Wall Street and by the unconcealed statement of Howell Cobb of Georgia, then secretary of the treasury, that Lincoln's election would be followed by disunion and a serious derangement of the financial interests of the country, kept the Empire State violently excited. It was reported in Southern newspapers that William B. Astor had contributed one million of dollars in aid of the fusion ticket.[14] It was a formidable combination of elements. Heretofore the Republican party had defeated them separately—now it met them as a united whole, when antagonisms, ceasing to be those of rational debate, had become those of fierce and furious passion. Greeley pronounced it "a struggle as intense, as vehement, and as energetic, as had ever been known," in New York.[15] Yet Thurlow Weed's confidence never wavered. "The fusion leaders have largely increased their fund," he wrote Lincoln, three days before the election, "and they are now using money lavishly. This stimulates and to some extent inspires confidence, and all the confederates are at work. Some of our friends are nervous. But I have no fear of the result in this State."[16]

After the election, returns came in rapidly. Before mid-

[11] "The names of eighty-one thousand New York men who voted for Fillmore in 1856 are inscribed on Republican poll-lists."—New York *Tribune*, September 11, 1860.

[12] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 471.

[13] October 18, 1860.

[14] Charleston *Mercury*, cited by *National Intelligencer*, November 1, 1860; Richmond *Enquirer*, November 2.

[15] Horace Greeley, *American Conflict*, Vol. 1, p. 300.

[16] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 300.

night they foreshadowed Lincoln's success, and the next morning's *Tribune* estimated that the Republicans had carried the electoral and state tickets by 30,000 to 50,000, with both branches of the Legislature and twenty-three out of thirty-three congressmen. The official figures did not change this prophecy, except to fix Lincoln's majority at 50,136 and Morgan's plurality at 63,460. Lincoln received 4374 votes more than Morgan, but Kelley ran 27,698 behind the fusion electoral ticket, showing that the Bell and Everett men declined to vote for the Softs' candidate for governor. Brady's total vote, 19,841, marked the pro-slavery candidate's small support, leaving Morgan a clear majority of 43,619.[17] "Mr. Dickinson and myself," said James T. Brady, six years later, in his tribute to the former's memory, "belonged to the small, despairing band in this State who carried into the political contest of the North, for the last time, the flag of the South, contending that the South should enjoy to the utmost, and with liberal recognition, all the rights she could fairly claim under the Constitution of the United States. How small that band was all familiar with the political history of this State can tell."[18]

[17] Edwin D. Morgan, 358,272; William Kelley, 294,812; James T. Brady, 19,841.—*Civil List, State of New York* (1887), p. 166.

[18] Address at Bar meeting in New York City upon death of Daniel S. Dickinson.

CHAPTER XXV

GREELEY, WEED, AND SECESSION

1860-1861

Upon the election of Lincoln in November, 1860, South Carolina almost immediately gave evidence of its purpose to secede from the Union. Democrats generally, and many supporters of Bell and Everett, had deemed secession probable in the event of Republican success—a belief so fully shared by the authorities at Washington, who understood the Southern people, that General Scott, then at the head of the army, wrote to President Buchanan before the end of October, advising that forts in all important Southern seaports be strengthened to avoid capture by surprise. On the other hand, the Republicans had regarded Southern threats as largely buncombe. They had been heard in 1820, in 1850, and so frequently in debate leading up to the contest in 1860, that William H. Seward, the most powerful leader of opinion in his party, had declared: "These hasty threats of disunion are so unnatural that they will find no hand to execute them."[1]

Nevertheless, when, on November 16, the South Carolina Legislature passed an act calling a convention to meet on December 17, the Republicans, still enthusiastic over their success, began seriously to consider the question of disunion. "Do you think the South will secede?" became as common a salutation as "Good-morning;" and, although a few New Yorkers, perhaps, gave the indifferent reply of Henry Ward Beecher—"I don't believe they will; and I don't care if they do"[2]—the gloom and uncertainty which hung over business

[1] Speech of February 29, 1860: *Seward's Works*, Vol. 4, p. 619.

[2] New York *Tribune*, November 30, 1860. The quotation is from an address delivered in Boston.

circles made all anxious to hear from the leaders of their party. Heretofore, Horace Greeley, Thurlow Weed, and William H. Seward, backed by Henry J. Raymond of the New York *Times* and James Watson Webb of the *Courier,* had been quick to meet any emergency, and their followers now looked to them for direction.

Horace Greeley was admittedly the most influential Republican journalist. He had not always agreed with the leaders, and just now an open break existed in the relations of himself and the powerful triumvirate headed by Thurlow Weed; but Greeley had voiced the sentiment of the rank and file of his party more often than he had misstated it, and the *Tribune* readers naturally turned to their prophet for a solution of the pending trouble. As usual, he had an opinion. The election occurred on November 6, and on the 9th he declared that "if the cotton States shall decide that they can do better out of the Union than in it, we insist on letting them go in peace. The right to secede may be a revolutionary one, but it exists nevertheless. . . . Whenever a considerable section of our Union shall deliberately resolve to go out, we shall resist all coercive measures designed to keep it in. We hope never to live in a republic, whereof one section is pinned to the residue by bayonets.[3] Two weeks later, on November 26, he practically repeated these views. "If the cotton States unitedly and earnestly wish to withdraw peacefully from the Union, we think they should and would be allowed to go. Any attempt to compel them by force to remain would be contrary to the principles enunciated in the immortal Declaration of Independence, contrary to the fundamental ideas on which human liberty is based."[4] As late as December 17, when South Carolina and other Southern States were on the threshold of secession, Greeley declared that "if the Declaration of Independence justified the secession from the British Empire of three millions of colonists in 1776, we do not see why it should not justify the secession of

[3] New York *Tribune*, November 9, 1861.
[4] *Ibid.*, November 26.

five millions of Southrons from the Union in 1861."[5] In January, he recanted in a measure. Yet, on February 23, he announced that "Whenever it shall be clear that the great body of the Southern people have become conclusively alienated from the Union, and anxious to escape from it, we will do our best to forward their views."[6]

Henry Ward Beecher[7] and the Garrison Abolitionists[8] also inclined to this view; and, in November and December, a few Republicans, because of a general repugnance to the coercion of a State, did not despise it. Naturally, however, the Greeley policy did not please the great bulk of Lincoln's intelligent supporters. The belief obtained that, the election having been fair and constitutional, the South ought to submit to the decision as readily as Northern Democrats acquiesced in it. Besides, a spontaneous feeling existed that the United States was a nation, that secession was treason, and seceders were traitors. Such people sighed for "an hour of Andrew Jackson;" and, to supply the popular demand, Jackson's proclamation against the nullifiers, written by Edward Livingston, a native of New York, then secretary of state, was published in a cheap and convenient edition. To the readers of such literature Greeley's peaceable secession seemed like the erratic policy of an eccentric thinker, and its promulgation, especially when it began giving comfort and encouragement to the South, contributed not a little to the defeat of its author for the United States Senate in the following February.

Thurlow Weed also had a plan, which quickly attracted the attention of people in the South as well as in the North. He held that suggestions of compromise which the South could accept might be proposed without dishonour to the victors in the last election, and, in several carefully written

[5] New York *Tribune*, December 17. [6] *Ibid.*, February 23.

[7] *Ibid.*, November 30. "In so far as the Free States are concerned," he said, "I hold that it will be an advantage for the South to go off."

[8] *The Liberator*, November and December.

editorials in the *Evening Journal,* he argued in favour of restoring the old line of the Missouri Compromise, and of substituting for the fugitive slave act, payment for rescued slaves by the counties in which the violation of law occurred. "When we refer, as we often do, triumphantly to the example of England," he said, "we are prone to forget that emancipation and compensation were provisions of the same act of Parliament."[9]

Weed was now sixty-three years of age—not an old man, and of little less energy than in 1824, when he drove about the State in his first encounter with Martin Van Buren. The success of the views he had fearlessly maintained, in defiance of menacing opponents, had been achieved in full measure, and he had reason to be proud of his conspicuous part in the result; but now, in the presence of secession which threatened the country because of that success, he seemed suddenly to revolt against the policy he himself had fostered. As his biographer expressed it, "he cast aside the weapons which none could wield so well,"[10] and, betraying the influences of his early training under the great Whig leaders, began to show his love for the Union after the manner of Clay and Webster.

Weed outlined his policy with rare skill, hoping that the discussion provoked by it might result in working out some plan to avoid disunion.[11] Raymond, in the *Times,* and Webb in the *Courier,* gave it cordial support; the leading New York business men of all parties expressed themselves favourable to conciliation and compromise. "I can assure you," wrote August Belmont to Governor Sprague of Rhode Island, on December 13, "that all the leaders of the Republican party in our State and city, with a few exceptions of the ultra radicals, are in favour of concessions, and that the popular mind of the North is ripe for them." On December 19 he wrote again: "Last evening I was present at an informal

[9] Albany *Evening Journal,* November 26, 1860.
[10] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed,* Vol. 2, p. 306.
[11] Albany *Evening Journal,* December 1, 1860.

meeting of about thirty gentlemen, comprising our leading men, Republicans, Union men, and Democrats, composed of such names as Astor, Aspinwall, Moses H. Grinnell, Hamilton Fish, R. M. Blatchford, &c. They were unanimous in their voice for reconciliation, and that the first steps have to be taken by the North."[12]

Belmont undoubtedly voiced the New York supporters of Douglas, Breckenridge, and Bell, and many conservative Republicans, representing the business interests of the great metropolis; but the bulk of the Republicans did not like a plan that overthrew the corner-stone of their party, which had won on its opposition to the extension of slavery into free territory. To go back to the line of 36° 30′, permitting slavery to the south of it, meant the loss of all that had been gained, and a renewal of old issues and hostilities in the near future. Republican congressmen from the State, almost without exception, yielded to this view, voicing the sentiment that it was vain to temporise longer with compromises. With fluent invective, James B. McKean of Saratoga assailed the South in a speech that recalled the eloquence of John W. Taylor, his distinguished predecessor, who, in 1820, led the forces of freedom against the Missouri Compromise. "The slave-holders," he said, "have been fairly defeated in a presidential election. They now demand that the victors shall concede to the vanquished all that the latter have ever claimed, and vastly more than they could secure when they themselves were victors. They take their principles in one hand, and the sword in the other, and reaching out the former they say to us, 'Take these for your own, or we will strike.' "[13]

[12] *Letters of August Belmont*, privately printed, pp. 15, 16.

[13] *Congressional Globe*, 1860-61, *Appendix*, p. 221. "Never, with my consent, shall the Constitution ordain or protect human slavery in any territory. Where it exists by law I will recognise it, but never shall it be extended over one acre of free territory." Speech of James Humphrey of Brooklyn.—*Ibid.*, p. 158. "Why should we now make any concessions to them? With our experience of the little importance attached to former compromises by the South, it is ridiculous to talk about entering into another. The restoration

Nevertheless, Weed kept at work. In an elaborate article, he suggested a "Convention of the people consisting of delegates appointed by the States, to which North and South might bring their respective griefs, claims, and reforms to a common arbitrament, to meet, discuss, and determine upon a future. It will be said that we have done nothing wrong, and have nothing to offer. This is precisely why we should both purpose and offer whatever may, by possibility, avert the evils of civil war and prevent the destruction of our hitherto unexampled blessings of Union."[14]

Preston King, the junior United States senator from New York, clearly voicing the sentiment of the majority of his party in Congress and out of it, bitterly opposed such a policy. "It cannot be done," he wrote Weed, on December 7. "You must abandon your position. It will prove distasteful to the majority of those whom you have hitherto led. You and Seward should be among the foremost to brandish the lance and shout for joy."[15] To this the famous editor, giving a succinct view of his policy, replied with his usual directness. "I have not dreamed of anything inconsistent with Republican duty. We owe our existence as a party to the

of the Missouri line, with the protection of slavery south of it, will not save the Union." Speech of John B. Haskin of Fordham.—*Ibid.*, p. 264. "The people of the North regard the election of Mr. Lincoln as the assurance that the day of compromise has ended; that henceforth slavery shall have all the consideration which is constitutionally due it and no more; that freedom shall have all its rights recognised and respected." Speech of Charles L. Beale of Kinderhook.—*Ibid.*, p. 974. "We of the North are called upon to save the Union by making concessions and giving new guarantees to the South. . . . But I am opposed to tinkering with the Constitution, especially in these exciting times. I am satisfied with it as it is." Speech of Alfred Ely of Rochester.—*Ibid.*, *Appendix*, p. 243. "I should be opposed to any alteration of the Constitution which would extend the area of slavery." Speech of Luther C. Carter of Flushing.—*Ibid.*, p. 278. "I am opposed to all changes in the Constitution whatever." Edwin R. Reynolds of Albion.—*Ibid.*, p. 1008.

[14] Albany *Evening Journal*, November 30, 1860.

[15] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 309.

repeal of the Missouri Compromise. But for the ever blind spirit of slavery, Buchanan would have taken away our ammunition and spiked our guns. The continued blindness of Democracy and the continued madness of slavery enabled us to elect Lincoln. That success ends our mission so far as Kansas and the encroachments of slavery into free territory are concerned. We have no territory that invites slavery for any other than political objects, and with the power of territorial organisation in the hands of Lincoln, there is no political temptation in all the territory belonging to us. The fight is over. Practically, the issues of the late campaign are obsolete. If the Republican members of Congress stand still, we shall have a divided North and a united South. If they move promptly, there will be a divided South and a united North."[16]

It is not, perhaps, surprising that Weed found so much to say in favour of his proposition, since the same compromise and the same arguments were made use of a few weeks later by no less a person than the venerable John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, the Nestor of the United States Senate. Crittenden was ten years older than Weed, and, like him, was actuated by sincere patriotism. Although his compromise contained six proposed amendments to the Constitution, it was believed that all differences between the sections could easily be adjusted after the acceptance of the first article, which recognised slavery as existing south of latitude 36° 30′, and pledged it protection "as property by all the departments of the territorial government during its continuance." The article also provided that States should be admitted from territory either north or south of that line, with or without slavery, as their constitutions might declare.[17] This part of the compromise was not new to Congress or to the country. It had been made, on behalf of the South, in

[16] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 309.

[17] The full text of the Crittenden compromise is given in the *Congressional Globe*, 1861, p. 114; also in Horace Greeley's *American Conflict*, Vol. 1, p. 376.

1847, and defeated by a vote of 114 to 82, only four Northern Democrats sustaining it. It was again defeated more decisively in 1848, when proposed by Douglas. "Thus the North," wrote Greeley, "under the lead of the Republicans, was required, in 1860, to make, on pain of civil war, concessions to slavery which it had utterly refused when divided only between the conservative parties of a few years before."[18]

Nevertheless, the Crittenden proposition invoked the same influences that supported the Weed plan. "I would most cheerfully accept it," wrote John A. Dix. "I feel a strong confidence that we could carry three-fourths of the States in favour of it as an amendment to the Constitution."[19] August Belmont said he had "yet to meet the first conservative Union-loving man, in or out of politics, who does not approve of your compromise propositions. . . . In our own city and State some of the most prominent men are ready to follow the lead of Weed. Restoration of the Missouri line finds favour with most of the conservative Republicans, and their number is increasing daily."[20] Belmont, now more than earlier in the month, undoubtedly expressed a ripening sentiment that was fostered by the gloomy state of trade, creating feverish conditions in the stock market, forcing New York banks to issue clearing-house certificates, and causing a marked decline in the Republican vote at the municipal election in Hudson.[21] Indeed, there is abundant evidence that the Crittenden proposition, if promptly carried out in December, might have resulted in peace. The Senate committee of thirteen to whom it was referred—consisting of two senators from the cotton States, three from the border States, three Northern Democrats, and five Republicans—decided that no report should be adopted unless it had the assent of a majority of the Republicans, and also a majority of the eight other members. Six of the eight voted for it. All the

[18] Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict*, Vol. 1, pp. 378, 379.
[19] Coleman, *Life of John J. Crittenden*, Vol. 2, p. 237.
[20] *Letters of August Belmont*, privately printed, p. 24.
[21] Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict*, Vol. 1, p. 362.

Republicans, and Jefferson Davis and Robert Toombs, representing the cotton States, voted against it. The evidence however, is almost convincing that Davis and Toombs would have supported it in December if the Republicans had voted for it. In speeches in the open Senate, Douglas declared it,[22] Toombs admitted it,[23] and Davis implied it.[24] Seward sounds the only note of their insincerity. "I think," he said, in a letter to the President-elect, "that Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana could not be arrested, even if we should offer all you suggest, and with it the restoration of the Missouri Compromise line. But persons acting for those States intimate that they might be so arrested, because they think that the Republicans are not going to concede the restoration of that line."[25] It is likely Seward hesitated to believe that his vote against the compromise, for whatever reason it was given, helped to inaugurate hostilities; and yet nothing is clearer, in spite of his letter to Lincoln, than that in December the Republicans defeated the Crittenden compromise, the adoption of which would have prevented civil war.[26]

In deference to the wishes of Lincoln and of his friends, who were grooming him for United States senator, Greeley,

[22] "In the committee of thirteen, a few days ago, every member from the South, including those from the cotton States, expressed their readiness to accept the proposition of my venerable friend from Kentucky as a final settlement of the controversy, if tendered and sustained by the Republican members." Douglas in the Senate, January 3, 1861.—*Congressional Globe*, Appendix, p. 41.

[23] "I said to the committee of thirteen, and I say here, that, with other satisfactory provisions, I would accept it." Toombs in the Senate, January 7, 1861.—*Globe*, p. 270. "I can confirm the Senator's declaration that Senator Davis himself, when on the committee of thirteen, was ready, at all times, to compromise on the Crittenden proposition. I will go further and say that Mr. Toombs was also." Douglas in the Senate, March 2, 1861.—*Globe*, p. 1391.

[24] See Davis's speech of January 10, 1861. *Congressional Globe*, p. 310.

[25] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 3, p. 263. Letter to Lincoln, December 26, 1860.

[26] James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 3, p. 155.

before the end of December, had, in a measure, given up his damaging doctrine of peaceable secession, and accepted the "no compromise" policy, laid down by Benjamin F. Wade, as "the only true, the only honest, the only safe doctrine."[27] It was necessary to Greeley's position just then, and to the stage of development which his candidacy had reached, that he should oppose Weed's compromise. On the 22d of December, therefore, he wrote the President-elect: "I fear nothing, care for nothing, but another disgraceful backdown of the free States. That is the only real danger. Let the Union slide—it may be reconstructed; let Presidents be assassinated—we can elect more; let the Republicans be defeated and crushed—we shall rise again. But another nasty compromise, whereby everything is conceded and nothing secured, will so thoroughly disgrace and humiliate us that we can never raise our heads, and this country becomes a second edition of the Barbary States, as they were sixty years ago. 'Take any form but that.'"[28] On the same day the *Tribune* announced that "Mr. Lincoln is utterly opposed to any concession or compromise that shall yield one iota of the position occupied by the Republican party on the subject of slavery in the territories, and that he stands now, as he stood in May last, when he accepted the nomination for the Presidency, square upon the Chicago platform."[29] Thus Lincoln had reassured Greeley's shrinking faith, and thenceforward his powerful journal took a more healthy and hopeful tone.[30]

Meantime, Weed laboured for the Crittenden compromise. He went to Washington, interviewed Republican members of Congress, and finally visited Lincoln at Springfield. Tickling the ear with a pleasing sentiment and alliteration, he wanted Republicans, he said, "to meet secession as patriots and not as partisans."[31] He especially urged forbearance

[27] New York *Tribune*, December 19, 1860.
[28] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 3, p. 258.
[29] New York *Tribune*, December 22, 1860.
[30] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 3, p. 258.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 261.

and concession out of consideration for Union men in Southern States. "Apprehending that we should be called upon to test the strength of the Government," he wrote, on January 9, 1861, "we saw, what is even more apparent now, that the effort would tax all its faculties and strain all its energies. Hence our desire before the trial came to make up a record that would challenge the approval of the world. This was due not less to ourselves than to the Union men of Southern States, who, with equal patriotism and more of sacrifice, amidst the pitiless peltings of the disunion storm, sought, like the dove sent out from the ark, a dry spot on which to set their feet."[32]

Weed's sincerity remained unquestioned, and his opinion, so ardently supported outside his party, would probably have had weight within his party under other conditions; but the President-elect, with his mind inflexibly made up on the question of extending slavery into the territories, refused to yield the cardinal principle of the Chicago platform. "Entertain no proposition for a compromise in regard to the extension of slavery," he wrote, December 11, to William Kellogg, a member of Congress from Illinois. "The instant you do, they have us under again; all our labour is lost, and sooner or later must be done over. . . . The tug has to come, and better now than later. You know I think the fugitive slave clause of the Constitution ought to be enforced—to put it in its mildest form, ought not to be resisted."[33] Two days later, in a letter to E. B. Washburne, also an Illinois member of Congress, he objected to the scheme for restoring the Missouri Compromise line. "Let that be done and immediately filibustering and extending slavery recommences. On that point hold firm as a chain of steel."[34] To Weed himself, on December 17, he repeated the same idea in almost the identical language.[35]

[32] Albany *Evening Journal*, January 9, 1861.
[33] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 3, p. 259.
[34] *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 259.
[35] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, pp. 310, 311.

Thurlow Weed was a journalist of pre-eminent ability, and, although a strenuous, hard hitter, who gave everybody as much sport as he wanted, he was a fair fighter, whom the bitterest critics of the radical Republican press united in praising for his consistency; but his epigrams and incisive arguments, sending a vibrating note of earnestness across the Alleghanies, could not move the modest and, as yet, unknown man of the West, who, unswayed by the fears of Wall Street, and the teachings of the great Whig compromisers, saw with a statesman's clearness the principle that explained the reason for his party's existence.

CHAPTER XXVI

SEYMOUR AND THE PEACE DEMOCRATS

1860-1861

While the contest over secession was raising its crop of disturbance and disorder at Washington, newspapers and politicians in the North continued to discuss public questions from their party standpoints. Republicans inveighed against the madness of pro-slavery leaders, Democrats berated Republicans as the responsible authors of the perils darkening the national skies, and Bell men sought for a compromise. Four days after the election of Lincoln, the Albany *Argus* clearly and temperately expressed the view generally taken of the secession movement by Democratic journals of New York. "We are not at all surprised at the manifestations of feeling at the South," it said. "We expected and predicted it; and for so doing were charged by the Republican press with favouring disunion; while, in fact, we simply correctly appreciated the feeling of that section of the Union. We sympathise with and justify the South, as far as this—their rights have been invaded to the extreme limit possible within the forms of the Constitution; and, if we deemed it certain that the real animus of the Republican party could become the permanent policy of the nation, we should think that all the instincts of self-preservation and of manhood rightfully impelled them to resort to revolution and a separation from the Union, and we would applaud them and wish them God-speed in the adoption of such a remedy."[1]

[1] Albany *Argus*, November 10, 1860. On November 12 the Rochester *Union* argued that the threatened secession of the slave States was but a counterpoise of the personal liberty bills and other measures

This was published in the heat of party conflict and Democratic defeat, when writers assumed that a compromise, if any adjustment was needed, would, of course, be forthcoming as in 1850. A little later, as conditions became more threatening, the talk of peaceable secession growing out of a disinclination to accept civil war, commended itself to persons who thought a peaceful dissolution of the Union, if the slave-holding South should seek it, preferable to such an alternative.[2] But as the spectre of dismemberment of the nation came nearer, concessions to the South as expressed in the Weed plan, and, later, in the Crittenden compromise, commended itself to a large part of the people. A majority of the voters at the preceding election undoubtedly favoured such an adjustment. The votes cast for Douglas, Bell, and Breckenridge in the free States, with one-fourth of those cast for Lincoln, and one-fourth for Breckenridge in the slave States, making 2,848,792 out of a total of 4,662,170, said a writer in *Appleton's Cyclopædia,* "were overwhelmingly in favour of conciliation, forbearance, and compromise."[3] Rhodes, the historian, approving this estimate, expresses the belief that the Crittenden compromise, if submitted to the people, would have commanded such a vote.[4]

In the closing months of 1860, and the opening months of 1861, this belief dominated the Democratic party as well as a large number of conservative Republicans; but, as the winter passed without substantial progress toward an effective compromise, the cloud of trouble assumed larger proportions and an alarmist spirit spread abroad. After Major Anderson, on the night of December 27, had transferred his command from its exposed position at Fort Moultrie to the stronger one at Fort Sumter, it was not uncommon to hear upon the streets disloyal sentiments blended with those of

of antagonism to slave-holding at the North. See, also, the New York *Herald*, November 9.

[2] Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, p. 338.

[3] *Appleton's Cyclopædia*, 1861, p. 700.

[4] James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 3, p. 261, *note.*

willing sacrifice to maintain the Union. This condition was accentuated by the action of the Legislature, which convened on January 2, 1861, with twenty-three Republicans and nine Democrats in the Senate, and ninety-three Republicans and thirty-five Democrats in the House. In his message, Governor Morgan urged moderation and conciliation. "Let New York," he said, "set an example; let her oppose no barrier, but let her representatives in Congress give ready support to any just and honourable sentiment; let her stand in hostility to none, but extend the hand of friendship to all, cordially uniting with other members of the Confederacy in proclaiming and enforcing a determination that the Constitution shall be honoured and the Union of the States be preserved."

On January 7, five days after this dignified and conservative appeal, Fernando Wood, imitating the example of South Carolina, advocated the secession of the city from the State. "Why should not New York City," said the Mayor, as if playing the part of a satirist, "instead of supporting by her contributions in revenue two-thirds of the expenses of the United States, become, also, equally independent? As a free city, with a nominal duty on imports, her local government could be supported without taxation upon her people. . . . Thus we could live free from taxes, and have cheap goods nearly duty free. . . . When disunion has become a fixed and certain fact, why may not New York disrupt the bands which bind her to a venal and corrupt master—to a people and a party that have plundered her revenues, attempted to ruin her commerce, taken away the power of self-government, and destroyed the confederacy of which she was the proud empire city."[5]

By order of a sympathising common council, this absurd message, printed in pamphlet form, was distributed among the people. Few, however, took it seriously. "Fernando Wood," said the *Tribune,* "evidently wants to be a traitor;

[5] Proceedings of the Board of Aldermen, LXXXI: p. 25, 26. New York *Herald,* January 8.

it is lack of courage only that makes him content with being a blackguard."[6] The next day Confederate forts fired upon the *Star of the West* while endeavouring to convey troops and supplies to Fort Sumter.

The jar of the Mayor's message and the roar of hostile guns were quickly followed by the passage, through the Legislature, of a concurrent resolution, tendering the President "whatever aid in men and money may be required to enable him to enforce the laws and uphold the authority of the Federal Government; and that, in the defence of the Union, which has conferred prosperity and happiness upon the American people, renewing the pledge given and redeemed by our fathers, we are ready to devote our fortunes, our lives, and our sacred honour."[7] This resolution undoubtedly expressed the overwhelming preponderance of sentiment in the State,[8] but its defiant tone, blended with the foolish words of Wood and the menacing act of South Carolina, called forth greater efforts for compromise, to the accomplishment of which a mammoth petition, signed by the leading business men of the State, was sent to Congress, praying that "measures, either of direct legislation or of amendment of the Constitution, may be speedily adopted, which, we are assured, will restore peace to our agitated country."[9]

On January 18, a meeting of the merchants of New York City, held in the Chamber of Commerce, unanimously adopted a memorial, addressed to Congress, urging the ac-

[6] New York *Tribune*, January 8, 1861.

[7] *Appleton's Cyclopædia*, 1861, p. 700.

[8] "The whole people in this part of the country are waiting with impatience for your assumption of the great office to which the suffrage of a free people has called you, and will hail you as a deliverer from treason and anarchy. In New York City all classes and parties are rapidly uniting in this sentiment, and here in Albany, where I am spending a few days in attendance upon Court, the general tone of feeling and thinking about public affairs shows little difference between Republicans and Democrats."—W. M. Evarts to Abraham Lincoln, January 15, 1861. Unpublished letter on file in Department of State at Washington.

[9] *Appleton's Cyclopædia*, 1861, p. 520.

ceptance of the Crittenden compromise. Similar action to maintain peace in an honourable way was taken in other cities of the State, while congressmen were daily loaded with appeals favouring any compromise that would keep the peace. Among other petitions of this character, Elbridge G. Spaulding presented one from Buffalo, signed by Millard Fillmore, Henry W. Rogers, and three thousand others. On January 24, Governor Morgan received resolutions, passed by the General Assembly of Virginia, inviting the State, through its Legislature, to send commissioners to a peace conference to be held at Washington on February 4. Nothing had occurred in the intervening weeks to change the sentiment of the Legislature, expressed earlier in the session; but, after much discussion and many delays, it was resolved, in acceding to the request of Virginia, that "it is not to be understood that this Legislature approves of the propositions submitted, or concedes the propriety of their adoption by the proposed convention. But while adhering to the position she has heretofore occupied, New York will not reject an invitation to a conference, which, by bringing together the men of both sections, holds out the possibility of an honourable settlement of our national difficulties, and the restoration of peace and harmony to the country."

The balloting for commissioners resulted in the election of David Dudley Field, William Curtis Noyes, James S. Wadsworth, James C. Smith, Amaziah B. James, Erastus Corning, Francis Granger, Greene C. Bronson, William E. Dodge, John A. King, and John E. Wool, with the proviso, however, that they were to take no part in the proceedings unless a majority of the non-slave-holding States were represented. The appearance of Francis Granger upon the commission was the act of Thurlow Weed. Granger, happy in his retirement at Canandaigua, had been out of office and out of politics so many years that, as he said in a letter to the editor of the *Evening Journal,* "it is with the greatest repugnance that I think of again appearing before the public."[10] But

[10] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed,* Vol. 2, p. 317.

Weed urged him, and Granger accepted "the flattering honour."[11] Thus, after many years of estrangement, the leader of the Woolies clasped hands again with the chief of the Silver-Grays.

Though a trifling event in itself, the detention of thirty-eight boxes of muskets by the New York police kept the people conscious of the strained relations between the States. The ownership of the guns, left for shipment to Savannah, would ordinarily have been promptly settled in a local court; but the detention now became an affair of national importance, involving the governors of two States and leading to the seizure of half a dozen merchant vessels lying peacefully at anchor in Savanah harbour. Instead of entering the courts, the consignor telegraphed the consignees of the "seizure," the consignees notified Governor Brown of Georgia, and the Governor wired Governor Morgan of New York, demanding their immediate release. Receiving no reply to his message, Brown, in retaliation, ordered the seizure of all vessels at Savannah belonging to citizens of New York. Although Governor Morgan gave the affair no attention beyond advising the vessel owners that their rights must be prosecuted in the United States courts, the shipment of the muskets and the release of the vessels soon closed the incident; but Brown's indecent zeal to give the episode an international character by forcing into notice the offensive assumption of an independent sovereignty, had much influence in hardening the "no compromise" attitude of many Northern people.

Nevertheless, the men of New York who desired peace on any honourable terms, seemed to grow more earnest as the alarm in the public mind became more intense. South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi had now seceded, and, as a last appeal to them, a monster and notable Union meeting, held at Cooper Institute on January 28 and addressed by eminent men of all parties, designated James T. Brady, Cornelius K. Garrison, and Appleton Oaksmith, as commissioners to confer with delegates to the

[11] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 318.

conventions of these seceding States "in regard to measures best calculated to restore the peace and integrity of this Union."[12] Scarcely had the meeting adjourned, however, before John A. Dix, as secretary of the treasury, thrilled the country by his fearless and historic dispatch, "If any one attempts to haul down the American flag, shoot him on the spot."

Dix had brought to the Cabinet the training of a soldier and of a wise, prudent, sagacious statesman of undaunted courage and integrity. With the exception of his connection with the Barnburners in 1848, he had been an exponent of the old Democratic traditions, and, next to Horatio Seymour, did more, probably, than any other man to bring about a reunion of his party in 1852. Nevertheless, the Southern politicians never forgave him. President Pierce offered him the position of secretary of state, and then withdrew it with the promise of sending him as minister to France; but the South again defeated him. From that time until his appointment as postmaster of New York, following the discovery, in May, 1860, of Isaac V. Fowler's colossal defalcation,[13] Dix had taken little part in politics. If the President, however, needed a man of his ability and honesty in the crisis precipitated by Fowler's embezzlement, such characteristics were more in demand, in January, 1861, at the treasury, when the government was compelled to pay twelve per cent. for a loan of five millions, while New York State sevens were taken at an average of 101 1-4.[14] Bankers refused longer to furnish money until the Cabinet contained men upon whom the

[12] *Appleton's Cyclopædia*, 1861, p. 520.

[13] Fowler, who was appointed postmaster of New York by President Pierce, began a system of embezzlements in 1855, which amounted, at the time of his removal, to $155,000.—Report of Postmaster-General Holt, *Senate Document*, 36th Congress, 1st Session, XI., 48. "In one year Fowler's bill at the New York Hotel, which he made the Democratic headquarters, amounted to $25,000. His brother, John Walker Fowler, clerk to Surrogate Tucker, subsequently absconded with $31,079, belonging to orphans and others." —Gustavus Myers, *History of Tammany Hall*, pp. 232, 233.

[14] John Jay Knox, *United States Notes*, p. 76.

friends of the government and the Union could rely, and Buchanan, yielding to the inevitable, appointed the man clearly indicated by the financiers.[15]

Although now sixty-three years old, with the energy and pluck of his soldier days, Dix had no ambition to be in advance of his party. He favoured the Crittenden compromise, advocated Southern rights under the limits of the Constitution, and wrote to leaders in the South with the familiarity of an old friend. "I recall occasions," wrote his son, "when my father spoke to me on the questions of the day, disclosing the grave trouble that possessed his thoughts. On one such occasion he referred to the possibility that New York might become a free city, entirely independent, in case of a general break-up;[16] not that he advocated the idea, but he placed it in the category of possibilities. It was his opinion that a separation, if sought by the South through peaceful means alone, must be conceded by the North, as an evil less than that of war. . . . Above all else, however, next to God, he loved the country and the flag. He did everything in his power to avert the final catastrophe. But when the question was reduced to that simple, lucid proposition presented by the leaders of secession, he had but one answer, and gave it with an emphasis and in words which were as lightning coming out of the east and shining even unto the west."[17]

[15] New York *Evening Post*, December 26, 1860.

"On Tuesday, January 8, my father received a dispatch from the President to come at once to the White House. He went immediately and was offered the War Department. This he declined, informing Mr. Buchanan, as had been agreed upon, that at that moment he could be of no service to him in any position except that of the Treasury Department, and that he would accept no other post. The President asked for time. The following day he had Mr. Philip Thomas's resignation in his hand, and sent General Dix's name to the Senate. It was instantly confirmed."—Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, p. 362.

[16] The plan advocated by Fernando Wood in his annual message to the Common Council, referred to on p. 348.

[17] Morgan Dix, *Memoirs of John A. Dix*, Vol. 1, pp. 336, 343.

From the day of his appointment to the Treasury to the end of the Administration, Dix resided at the White House as the guest of the President, and under his influence, coupled with that of Black, Holt, and Stanton, Buchanan assumed a more positive tone in dealing with secession. Heretofore, with the exception of Major Anderson's movements at Fort Sumter, and Lieutenant Slemmer's daring act at Fort Pickens, the seizure of federal property had gone on without opposition or much noise; but now, at last, a prominent New Yorker, well known to every public man in the State, had flashed a patriotic order into the heart of the Southern Confederacy, startling the country into a realising sense of the likelihood of civil war.

In the midst of this excitement, a state convention, called by the Democratic state committee and composed of four delegates from each assembly district, representing the party of Douglas, of Breckenridge, and of Bell and Everett, assembled at Albany on January 31. Tweddle Hall was scarcely large enough to contain those who longed to be present at this peace conference. Of the prominent public men of the Commonwealth belonging to the three parties, the major part seemed to make up the assemblage, which Greeley pronounced "the strongest and most imposing ever convened within the State."[18] On the platform sat Horatio Seymour, Amasa J. Parker, and William Kelley, the Softs' recent candidate for governor, while half a hundred men flanked them on either side, who had been chosen to seats in Congress, in the Legislature, and to other places of honour. "No convention which had nominations to make, or patronage to dispose of, was ever so influentially constituted."[19]

Sanford E. Church of Albion became temporary chairman, and Amasa J. Parker, president. Parker had passed his day of running for office, but, still in the prime of life, only fifty-four years old, his abilities ran with swiftness along many channels of industry. In stating the object of the conven-

[18] Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict*, Vol. 1, p. 388.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 388.

tion, the vociferous applause which greeted his declaration that the people of the State, demanding a peaceful settlement of the questions leading to disunion, have a right to insist upon conciliation and compromise, disclosed the almost unanimous sentiment of the meeting; but the after-discussion developed differences that anticipated the disruption that was to come to the Democratic party three months later. One speaker justified Southern secession by urgent considerations of necessity and safety; another scouted the idea of coercing a seceding State; to a third, peaceful separation, though painful and humiliating, seemed the only safe and honourable way. Reuben H. Walworth, the venerable ex-chancellor, declared that civil war, instead of restoring the Union, would forever defeat its reconstruction. "It would be as brutal," he said, "to send men to butcher our own brethren of the Southern States, as it would be to massacre them in the Northern States."

Horatio Seymour received the heartiest greeting. Whether for good or evil, according to the standards by which his critics may judge him, he swayed the minds of his party to a degree that was unequalled among his contemporaries. For ten years his name had been the most intimately associated with party policies, and his influence the most potent. The exciting events of the past three months, with six States out of the Union and revolution already begun, had profoundly stirred him. He had followed the proceedings of Congress, he had studied the disposition of the South, he understood the sentiment in the North, and his appeal for a compromise, without committing himself to some of the extravagances which were poured forth in absolute good faith by Walworth, earned him enthusiastic commendation from friends and admirers. "The question is simply this," he said; "Shall we have compromise *after* war, or compromise *without* war?" He eulogised the valour of the South, he declared a blockade of its extended sea coast nearly impossible, he hinted that successful coercion by the North might not be less revolutionary than successful secession by the South, he predicted

the ruin of Northern industries, and he scolded Congress, urging upon it a compromise—not to pacify seceding States, but to save border States. "The cry of 'No compromise' is false in morals," he declared; "it is treason to the spirit of the Constitution; it is infidelity in religion; the cross itself is a compromise, and is pleaded by many who refuse all charity to their fellow-citizens. It is the vital principle of social existence; it unites the family circle; it sustains the church, and upholds nationalities. . . . But the Republicans complain that, having won a victory, we ask them to surrender its fruits. We do not wish them to give up any political advantage. We urge measures which are demanded by the hour and the safety of our Union. Are they making sacrifices, when they do that which is required by the common welfare?"[20]

It remained for George W. Clinton of Buffalo, the son of the illustrious DeWitt Clinton, to lift the meeting to the higher plane of genuine loyalty to the Union. Clinton was a Hard in politics. He had stood with John A. Dix and Daniel S. Dickinson, had been defeated for lieutenant-governor on their ticket, and had supported Breckenridge; but when the fateful moment arrived at which a decision had to be made for or against the country, his genius, like the prescience of Dix, guided him rightly. "Let us conciliate our erring brethren," he said, "who, under a strange delusion, have, as they say, seceded from us; but, for God's sake, do not let us humble the glorious government under which we have been so happy and which will yet do so much for the happiness of mankind. Gentlemen, I hate to use a word that will offend my Southern brother, but we have reached a time when, as

[20] Albany *Argus*, February 1, 1861.

William H. Russell, correspondent of the London *Times*, who dined with Horatio Seymour, Samuel J. Tilden and George Bancroft, wrote that "the result left on my mind by their conversation and arguments was that, according to the Constitution, the government could not employ force to prevent secession, or to compel States which had seceded by the will of the people to acknowledge the federal power."—Entry March 17, *Diary*, p. 20.

a man—if you please, as a Democrat—I must use plain terms. There is no such thing as legal secession. The Constitution of these United States was intended to form a firm and perpetual Union. If secession be not lawful, then, what is it? I use the term reluctantly but truly—it is rebellion! rebellion against the noblest government man ever framed for his own benefit and for the benefit of the world. What is it—this secession? I am not speaking of the men. I love the men, but I hate treason. What is it but nullification by the wholesale? I have venerated Andrew Jackson, and my blood boiled, in old time, when that brave patriot and soldier of Democracy said—'the Union, it must and shall be preserved.' (Loud applause.) Preserve it? Why should we preserve it, if it would be the thing these gentlemen would make it? Why should we love a government that has no dignity and no power? Look at it for a moment. Congress, for just cause, declares war, but one State says, 'War is not for me—I secede.' And so another and another, and the government is rendered powerless. I am not prepared to humble the general government at the feet of the seceding States. I am unwilling to say to the government, 'You must abandon your property, you must cease to collect the revenues, because you are threatened.' In other words, gentlemen, it seems to me—and I know I speak the wishes of my constituents—that, while I abhor coercion, in one sense, as war, I wish to preserve the dignity of the government of these United States as well."[21]

[21] Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict*, Vol. 1, p. 394.

"When rebellion actually began many loyal Democrats came nobly out and planted themselves by the side of the country. But those who clung to the party organisation, what did they do? A month before Mr. Lincoln was inaugurated they held a state convention for the Democratic party of the State of New York. It was said it was to save the country,—it was whispered it was to save the party. The state committee called it and representative men gathered to attend it. . . . They applauded to the echo the very blasphemy of treason, but they attempted by points of order to silence DeWitt Clinton's son because he dared to raise his voice for the Constitution of his country and to call rebellion by its proper name."—

The applause that greeted these loyal sentences disclosed a patriotic sentiment, which, until then, had found no opportunity for expression; yet the convention, in adopting a series of resolutions, was of one mind on the question of submitting the Crittenden compromise to a direct vote of the people. "Their voice," said the chairman, "will be omnipresent here, and if it be raised in time it may be effectual elsewhere."

There is something almost pathetic in the history of these efforts which were made during the progress of secession, to avert, if possible, the coming shock. The great peace conference, assembled by the action of Virginia, belongs to these painful and wasted endeavours. On February 4, the day that delegates from six cotton States assembled at Montgomery to form a Southern confederacy, one hundred and thirty-three commissioners, representing twenty-one States, of which fourteen were non-slave-holding, met at Washington and continued in session, sitting with closed doors, until the 27th. It was a body of great dignity—a "fossil convention," the *Tribune* called it—whose proceedings, because of the desire in the public mind to avoid civil war, attracted wide attention. David Dudley Field represented New York on the committee on resolutions, which proposed an amendment of seven sections to the Constitution. On February 26, these were taken up in their order for passage. The first section provided for the restoration of the Missouri Compromise line under the then existing conditions, provided that whenever a new State was formed north or south of that line it should be admitted with or without slavery, as its constitution might declare. This was the important concession; but, though it was less favourable to the South than the Crittenden compromise, it failed to satisfy the radical Republicans, who had from the first opposed the convention. Accordingly, the vote, taken by States, stood eight to eleven against it, New York being included among the noes. The next morning,

Speech of Roscoe Conkling, September 26, 1862, A. R. Conkling, *Life and Letters of Roscoe Conkling*, p. 180.

however, after agreeing to a reconsideration of the question, the convention passed the section by a vote of nine to eight, New York, divided by the absence of David Dudley Field, being without a voice in its determination. Field never fully recovered from this apparent breach of trust.[22] In committee, he had earnestly opposed the proposed amendment, talking almost incessantly for three weeks, but, at the supreme moment, when the report came up for passage, he withdrew from the convention, without explanation, thus depriving his State of a vote upon all the sections save one, because of an evenly divided delegation.

The convention, however, was doomed to failure before Field left it. Very early in its life the eloquent New Yorker, assisting to rob it of any power for good, declared his opposition to any amendment to the Constitution. "The Union," he said, "is indissoluble, and no State can secede. I will lay down my life for it. . . . We must have the arbitration of reason, or the arbitrament of the sword." Amaziah B. James, another New Yorker, possessed the same plainness of speech. "The North will not enter upon war until the South forces it to do so," he said, mildly. "But when you begin it, the government will carry it on until the Union is restored and its enemies put down."[23] If any stronger Union sentiment were needed, the remarks of Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, in disclosing the attitude of his party, supplied it. "The election of Lincoln," he said, "must be regarded as the triumph of principles cherished in the hearts of the people of the free States. Chief among these principles is the restriction of slavery within State limits; not war upon slavery within those limits, but fixed opposition to its extension beyond them. By a fair and unquestionable majority we have secured that triumph. Do you

[22] See New York *Tribune*, March 23, 1861, for Field's statement in defence of his action. Also *Tribune*, March 7, for John A. King's charges.

[23] Lucius E. Chittenden, *Report of Proceedings of Peace Conference*, pp. 157, 170, 303, 428.

think we, who represent this majority, will throw it away? Do you think the people would sustain us if we undertook to throw it away?"[24]

After three weeks of such talk, even Virginia, whose share in forming the Union exceeded that of any other State, manifested its discouragement by repudiating the proposed amendment as an insufficient guarantee for bringing back the cotton States or holding the border States. When, finally, on March 4, the result of the conference was offered in the United States Senate, only seven votes were cast in its favour. So faded and died the last great effort for compromise and peace. For months it must have been apparent to every one that the party of Lincoln would not yield the corner-stone of its principles. It desired peace, was quick to co-operate, and ready to conciliate, but its purpose to preserve free territory for free labour remained fixed and unalterable.

[24] Lucius E. Chittenden, *Report of Proceedings of Peace Conference*, p. 304.

CHAPTER XXVII

WEED'S REVENGE UPON GREELEY

1861

In the winter of 1860-61, while the country was drifting into civil war, a desperate struggle was going on at Albany to elect a United States senator in place of William H. Seward, whose term expired on the fourth of March. After the defeat of the Senator at Chicago, sentiment settled upon his return to Washington; but when Lincoln offered him the position of secretary of state, Thurlow Weed announced William M. Evarts as his candidate for the United States Senate. Evarts was now forty-three years of age. Born in Boston, a graduate of Yale, and of the Harvard law school, he had been a successful lawyer at the New York bar for twenty years. Union College had conferred upon him, in 1857, the degree of Doctor of Laws, and the rare ability and marvellous persistence manifested in the Lemmon slave case, in which he was opposed by Charles O'Conor, had given abundant evidence of the great intellectual powers that subsequently distinguished him. He had, also, other claims to recognition. The wit and great learning that made him the most charming of conversationalists increased his popularity, while his love of books, his excellent taste, and good manners made him welcome in the club and the social circle. Indeed, he seems to have possessed almost every gift and grace that nature and fortune could bestow, giving him high place among his contemporaries.

Evarts had not then held office. The places that O'Conor and Brady had accepted presented no attractions for him; nor did he seem to desire the varied political careers that had distinguished other brilliant young members of the

New York bar. But he had taken pleasure in bringing to his party a wisdom in council which was only equalled by his power in debate. If this service were insufficient to establish his right to the exalted preferment he now sought, his recent valuable work at the Chicago convention was enough to satisfy Thurlow Weed, at least, that generous assistance of such surpassing value should be richly rewarded.

Up to this time, Weed's authority in his party in the State had been supreme. He failed to have his way in 1846 when John Young seized the nomination for governor, and some confusion existed as to his influence in the convention that selected Myron Clark in 1854; but for all practical purposes Weed had controlled the Whig and Republican parties since their formation, almost without dissent. Circumstances sometimes favoured him. The hard times of 1837 made possible Seward's election as governor; the split in the Democratic party over the canal, and later over the Wilmot Proviso, secured Seward a seat in the United States Senate; and the sudden and wholly unexpected repeal of the Missouri Compromise defeated the Silver-Grays and aided in rapidly reducing the strength of the Know-Nothings; but these changes in the political situation, although letting Weed's party into power, burdened his leadership with serious problems. It required a master hand safely to guide a party between the Radical and Abolition factions on one side and the Conservatives on the other, and his signal success commended him to President Lincoln, who frequently counselled with him, often inviting him to Washington by telegram during the darkest days of civil war.

But the defection of Greeley, supplemented by William Cullen Bryant and the union of radical leaders who came from the Democratic party, finally blossomed into successful rebellion at Chicago. This encouraged Greeley to lead one at Albany. The Legislature had one hundred and sixteen Republican members, requiring fifty-nine to nominate in caucus. Evarts could count on forty-two and Greeley upon

about as many. In his effort to secure the remaining seventeen, Weed discovered that Ira Harris had a considerable following, who were indisposed to affiliate with Evarts, while several assemblymen indicated a preference for other candidates. This precipitated a battle royal. Greeley did not personally appear in Albany, but he scorned none of the ordinary crafts of party management. Charles A. Dana, then of the *Tribune,* represented him, and local leaders from various parts of the State rallied to his standard and industriously prosecuted his canvass. Their slogan was "down with the Dictator." It mattered not that they had approved Weed's management in the past, their fight now proposed to end the one-man power, and every place-hunter who could not secure patronage under Lincoln's administration if Evarts went to the Senate, ranged himself against Weed. On the side of the *Tribune's* editor, also, stood the independent, whose dislike of a party boss always encourages him to strike whenever the way is open to deal an effective blow. This was Greeley's great strength. It marshalled itself.

Weed summoned all his hosts. Moses H. Grinnell, Simeon Draper, and A. Oakey Hall led the charge, flanked by a cloud of state and county officials, and an army of politicians who filled the hotels and crowded the lobbies of the capitol. The *Tribune* estimated Evarts' backers at not less than one thousand.[1] For two weeks the battle raged with all the characteristics of an intense personal conflict. Greeley declared it "a conflict which was to determine whether a dynasty was to stand and give law to its subjects, or be overthrown and annihilated. Fully appreciating this, not Richmond at Bosworth Field, Charles at Naseby, nor Napoleon at Waterloo made a more desperate fight for empire than did the one-man power at Albany to retain the sceptre it has wielded for so many years over the politics and placemen of this State."[2] In their desperation both sides appealed to the President-elect, who refused to be drawn into the struggle. "Justice

[1] New York *Tribune,* February 5, 1861.

[2] *Ibid.,* February 5, 1861.

to all" was his answer to Weed. "I have said nothing more particular to any one."[8]

As the canvass grew older, it became known that several of Harris' supporters would go to Greeley whenever their assistance would nominate him. This sacrifice, however, was not to be made so long as Harris held the balance of power; and since Weed's desire to defeat Greeley was well understood, Harris counted with some degree of certainty upon Evarts' supporters whenever a serious break threatened. Weed's relations with Harris were not cordial. For years they had lived in Albany, and as early as 1846 their ways began to diverge; but Harris' character for wisdom, learning, and integrity compelled respect. He had been an assemblyman in 1844 and 1845, a state senator in 1846, a delegate to the constitutional convention of 1846, and a justice of the Supreme Court from 1847 to 1859. His name was familiar throughout the State. From the time he took up the cause of the Anti-Renters in 1846 he had possessed the confidence of the common people, and his great fairness and courtesy upon the bench had added largely to his reputation. He was without any pretence to oratory. The gifts that made Evarts a leader of the New York bar for three decades did not belong to him; but everybody knew that in the United States Senate he would do as much as Evarts to uphold President Lincoln.

The caucus convened on the evening of February 4. Only one member was absent. Weed and Evarts sat with Governor Morgan in the executive chamber—Harris in the rooms of Lieutenant-Governor Campbell at Congress Hall. The first ballot gave Evarts 42, Greeley 40, Harris 20, with 13 scattering. Bets had been made that Evarts would get 50, and some over-sanguine ones fixed it at 60. What Weed expected does not appear; but the second ballot, which reduced Evarts to 39 and raised Greeley to 42, did not please Speaker Littlejohn, who carried orders between the executive and assembly chambers. It seemed to doom Evarts to ultimate defeat. The

[8] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 324.

chamber grew dark with the gloomy frowns of men who had failed to move their stubborn representatives. The next four ballots, quickly taken, showed little progress, but the seventh raised Greeley to 47 and dropped Harris to 19, while Evarts held on at 39. An assurance that the object of their labours would be reached with the assistance of some of Harris' votes on the next ballot, made the friends of Greeley jubilant. It was equally apparent to the astonished followers of the grim manager who was smoking vehemently in the executive chamber, that Evarts would be unable to weather another ballot. A crisis, therefore, was inevitable, but it was the crisis for which Weed had been waiting and watching, and without hesitation he sent word to elect Harris.[4] This settled it. Greely received 49, Harris 60, with 6 scattering. Weed did not get all he wanted, but he got revenge.

There were reasons other than revenge, however, that induced men vigorously opposed to secession to resent the candidacy of Horace Greeley.[5] The editor of the *Tribune* certainly did not want the Southern States to secede, nor did he favour secession, as has often been charged, but his peculiar treatment of the question immediately after the November election gave the would-be secessionists comfort, if it did not absolutely invite and encourage the South to believe in the possibility of peaceable secession.

Greeley seems to have taken failure with apparent serenity. He professed to regard it as the downfall of Weed

[4] "Pale as ashes, Weed sat smoking a cigar within earshot of the bustle in the crowded assembly room where the caucus sat. Littlejohn stalked over the heads of the spectators and reported to Weed. Unmindful of the fact that he had a cigar in his mouth, Weed lighted another and put it in, then rose in great excitement and said to Littlejohn, 'Tell the Evarts men to go right over to Harris—to *Harris*—to HARRIS!' The order was given in the caucus. They wheeled into line like Napoleon's Old Guard, and Harris was nominated."—H. B. Stanton, *Random Recollections*, p. 218.

[5] "It is quite possible that the *Tribune's* articles of November, 1860, cost Greeley the senatorship."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 3, p. 142.

rather than the defeat of himself. His friends who knew of the antagonistic relations long existing between Harris and Weed, said the *Tribune,* exultingly, were willing to see Harris nominated, since "he would become an agent for the accomplishment of their main purpose—the overthrow of the dictatorship, and the establishment upon its ruins of the principle of political independence in thought and action."[6] But whatever its influence upon Weed, the nomination of Harris was a bitter disappointment to Greeley. He was extraordinarily ambitious for public preferment. The character or duties of the office seemed to make little difference to him. Congressman, senator, governor, lieutenant-governor, comptroller of state, and President of the United States, at one time or another greatly attracted him, and to gain any one of them he willingly lent his name or gave up his time; but never did he come so near reaching the goal of his ambition as in February, 1861. The promise of Harris' supporters to transfer their votes encouraged a confidence that was not misplaced. The Greeley men were elate, the more ardent entertaining no doubt that the eighth ballot would bring victory; and, had Weed delayed a moment longer, Greeley must have been a United States senator. But Weed did not delay, and Greeley closed his life with an office-holding record of ninety days in Congress. Like George Borrow, he seemed never to realise that his simple, clear, vigorous English was to be the crown of an undying fame.[7]

[6] New York *Tribune,* February 5, 1861.

[7] "It is one of the curiosities of human nature that Greeley, who exceeded in influence many of our Presidents, should have hankered so constantly for office. It is strange enough that the man who wrote as a dictator of public opinion in the *Tribune* on the 9th of November could write two days later the letter to Seward, dissolving the political firm of Seward, Weed, and Greeley. In that letter the petulance of the office-seeker is shown, and the grievous disappointment that he did not get the nomination for lieutenant-governor, which went to Raymond, stands out plainly."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States,* Vol. 2, p. 72.

CHAPTER XXVIII

LINCOLN, SEWARD, AND THE UNION

1860-1861

As THE day approached for the opening of Congress on Monday, December 3, 1860, William H. Seward left Auburn for Washington. At this time he possessed the most powerful influence of any one in the Republican party. While other leaders, his rivals in eloquence and his peers in ability, exercised great authority, the wisdom of no one was more widely appreciated, or more frequently drawn upon. "Sumner, Trumbull, and Wade," says McClure, speaking from personal acquaintance, "had intellectual force, but Trumbull was a judge rather than a politician, Wade was oppressively blunt, and Sumner cultivated an ideal statesmanship that placed him outside the line of practical politics. Fessenden was more nearly a copy of Seward in temperament and discretion, but readily conceded the masterly ability of his colleague. Seward was not magnetic like Clay or Blaine, but he knew how to make all welcome who came within range of his presence."[1]

Thus far, since the election, Seward had remained silent upon the issues that now began to disturb the nation. Writing to Thurlow Weed on November 18, 1860, he declared he was "without schemes or plans, hopes, desires, or fears for the future, that need trouble anybody so far as I am concerned."[2] Nevertheless, he had scarcely reached the capital before he discovered that he was charged with being the author of Weed's compromise policy. "Here's a muss," he

[1] Alex. K. McClure, *Recollections of Half a Century*, pp. 213, 214.
[2] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 478.

wrote, on December 3. "Republican members stopped at the *Tribune* office on their way, and when they all lamented your articles, Dana told them they were not yours but mine; that I 'wanted to make a great compromise like Clay and Webster.'"[3]

To Republicans it did not seem possible that Weed's plan of conciliation, so carefully and ably presented, could be published without the assistance, or, at least, the approval of his warm personal and political friend,—an impression that gained readier credence because of the prompt acquiescence of the New York *Times* and the *Courier*. Seward, however, quickly punctured Charles A. Dana's misinformation, and continued to keep his own counsels. "I talk very little, and nothing in detail," he wrote his wife, on December 2; "but I am engaged busily in studying and gathering my thoughts for the Union."[4] To Weed, on the same day, he gave the political situation. "South Carolina is committed. Georgia will debate, but she probably follows South Carolina. Mississippi and Alabama likely to follow. . . . Members are coming in, all in confusion. Nothing can be agreed on in advance, but silence for the present, which I have insisted must not be *sullen,* as last year, but respectful and fraternal."[5]

Seward, who had now been in Washington several days, had not broken silence even to his Republican colleagues in the Senate, and "to smoke him out," as one of them expressed it, a caucus was called. But it failed of its purpose. "Its real object," he wrote Weed, "was to find out whether I authorised the *Evening Journal, Times,* and *Courier* articles. I told them they would know what I think and what I propose when I do myself. The Republican party to-day is as uncompromising as the secessionists in South Carolina. A month hence each may come to think that moderation is wiser."[6]

[3] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 308.
[4] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 479.
[5] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, pp. 307, 308.
[6] *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 308.

It is not easy to determine from his correspondence just what was in Seward's mind from the first to the thirteenth of December, but it is plain that he was greatly disturbed. Nothing seemed to please him. Weed's articles perplexed[7] him; his colleagues distrusted[8] him; the debates in the Senate were hasty and feeble;[9] few had any courage or confidence in the Union;[10] and the action of the Sumner radicals annoyed him.[11] Rhodes, the historian, says he was wavering.[12] He was certainly waiting,—probably to hear from Lincoln; but while he waited his epigrammatic criticism of Buchanan's message, which he wrote his wife on December 5, got into the newspapers and struck a popular note. "The message shows conclusively," he said, "that it is

[7] "Weed's articles have brought perplexities about me which he, with all his astuteness, did not foresee."—F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 480.

[8] "Our senators agree with me to practise reticence and kindness. But others fear that I will figure, and so interfere and derange all."—*Ibid.*, p. 480.

[9] "The debates in the Senate are hasty, feeble, inconclusive and unsatisfactory; presumptuous on the part of the ill-tempered South; feeble and frivolous on the part of the North."—*Ibid.*, p. 481.

[10] "All is apprehension about the Southern demonstrations. No one has any system, few any courage, or confidence in the Union, in this emergency."—*Ibid.*, p. 478.

[11] "Charles Sumner's lecture in New York brought a 'Barnburner' or Buffalo party around him. They gave nine cheers for the passage in which he describes Lafayette as rejecting all and every compromise, and the knowing ones told him those cheers laid out Thurlow Weed, and then he came and told me, of course."—Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 308.

[12] "While the evidence is not positive that Seward contemplated heading a movement of Republicans that would have resulted in the acceptance by them of a plan similar in essence to the Crittenden compromise, yet his private correspondence shows that he was wavering, and gives rise to the belief that the pressure of Weed, Raymond, and Webb would have outweighed that of his radical Republican colleagues if he had not been restrained by the unequivocal declarations of Lincoln."—James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. 3, p. 157.

the duty of the President to execute the laws—unless somebody opposes him; and that no State has a right to go out of the Union—unless it wants to."[13]

On December 13 Seward received the desired letter from the President-elect, formally tendering him the office of secretary of state. The proffer was not unexpected. Press and politicians had predicted it and conceded its propriety. "From the day of my nomination at Chicago," Lincoln said, in an informal and confidential letter of the same day, "it has been my purpose to assign you, by your leave, this place in the Administration. I have delayed so long to communicate that purpose, in deference to what appeared to me a proper caution in the case. Nothing has been developed to change my view in the premises; and I now offer you the place in the hope that you will accept it, and with the belief that your position in the public eye, your integrity, ability, learning, and great experience all combine to render it an appointment pre-eminently fit to be made."[14]

In the recent campaign Seward had attracted such attention and aroused such enthusiasm, that James Russell Lowell thought his magnanimity, since the result of the convention was known, a greater ornament to him and a greater honour to his party than his election to the Presidency would have been."[15] Seward's friends had followed his example. "We all feel that New York and the friends of Seward have acted nobly," wrote Leonard Swett to Weed."[16] A month after the offer of the portfolio had been made, Lincoln wrote Seward that "your selection for the state department having become public, I am happy to find scarcely any objection to it. I shall have trouble with every other cabinet appointment—so much so, that I shall have to defer them as long as possible, to avoid being teased into insanity, to make changes."[17]

[13] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 480.
[14] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 3, p. 349.
[15] *Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1860; *Lowell's Political Essays*, p. 34.
[16] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 301.
[17] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 493.

In 1849, Seward had thought the post of minister, or even secretary of state, without temptations for him, but, in 1860, amidst the gathering clouds of a grave crisis, the championship of the Union in a great political arena seemed to appeal, in an exceptional degree, to his desire to help guide the destinies of his country; and, after counselling with Weed at Albany, and with his wife at Auburn, he wrote the President-elect that he thought it his duty to accept the appointment."[18] Between the time of its tender and of its acceptance Seward had gained a clear understanding of Lincoln's views; for, after his conference with Weed, the latter visited Springfield and obtained a written statement from the President-elect. This statement has never appeared in print, but it practically embodied the sentiment written Kellogg and Washburn, and which was received by them after Seward left Washington for Auburn.

With this information the Senator returned to the capital, stopping over night at the Astor House in New York, where he unexpectedly found the New England Society celebrating Forefathers' Day. The knowledge of his arrival quickly reached the banqueters. They knew that Weed had seen Lincoln, and that, to hear the tidings from Springfield, Seward had travelled with his friend from Syracuse to Albany. Eagerly, therefore, they pressed him for a speech, for words spoken by the man who would occupy the first place in Lincoln's Cabinet, meant to the business men of the great metropolis, distracted by the disturbed conditions growing out of the disunion movement, words of national salvation. Seward never spoke from impulse. He understood the value of silence and the necessity of thought before utterance. All of his many great speeches were prepared in a most painstaking manner. But, as many members of the society were personal or political friends, he consented to address them, talking briefly and with characteristic optimism, though without disclosing Lincoln's position or his own on the question of compromise. "I know that the necessities which created this

[18] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, pp. 481, 487.

Union," he said, in closing, "are stronger to-day than they were when the Union was cemented; and that these necessities are as enduring as the passions of men are short-lived and effervescent. I believe that the cause of secession was as strong, on the night of November 6, when the President and Vice President were elected, as it has been at any time. Some fifty days have now passed; and I believe that every day the sun has set since that time, it has set upon mollified passions and prejudices; and if you will only await the time, sixty more suns will shed a light and illuminate a more cheerful atmosphere."[19]

This speech has been severely criticised for its unseemly jest, its exuberant optimism, and its lack of directness. It probably discloses, in the copy published the next morning, more levity than it seemed to possess when spoken, with its inflections and intonations, while its optimism, made up of hopeful generalities which were not true, and of rhetorical phrases that could easily be misapprehended, appeared to sustain the suggestion that he did not realise the critical juncture of affairs. But the assertion that he predicted the "war will be over in sixty days" was a ridiculous perversion of his words. No war existed at that time, and his "sixty suns" plainly referred to the sixty days that must elapse before Lincoln's inauguration. Nevertheless, the "sixty days prediction," as it was called, was repeated and believed for many years.

The feature of the speech that makes it peculiarly interesting, however, is its strength in the advocacy of the Union. Seward believed that he had a difficult rôle to play. Had he so desired he could not support the restoration of the Missouri Compromise line, for the President-elect had ruled inflexibly against it; neither could he openly oppose it, lest it hurry the South into some overt act of treason before Lincoln's inauguration. So he began exalting the Union, skilfully creating the impression, at least by inference, that he would not support the compromise, although his hearers and

[19] New York *Times*, December 24, 1860.

readers held to the belief that he would have favoured it had he not submitted to Lincoln's leadership by accepting the state department.

During Seward's absence from Washington he was placed upon the Senate committee of thirteen to consider the Crittenden compromise. It was admitted that the restoration of the Missouri line was the nub of the controversy; that, unless it could be accepted, compromise would fail; and that failure meant certain secession. War of a most bitter and sanguinary character will be sure to follow," wrote Senator Grimes of Iowa.[20] "The heavens are, indeed, black," said Dawes of Massachusetts, "and an awful storm is gathering. I am wellnigh appalled at its awful and inevitable consequences."[21] Seward did not use words of such alarming significance, but he appreciated the likelihood of secession. On December 26 he wrote Lincoln that "sedition will be growing weaker and loyalty stronger every day from the acts of secession as they occur;" but, in the same letter, he added: "South Carolina has already taken the attitude of defiance. Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana have pushed on to the same attitude. I think that they could not be arrested, even if we should offer all you suggest, and with it the restoration of the Missouri Compromise line."[22] To his wife, also, to whom alone he confided his secret thoughts, he wrote, on the same day: "The South will force on the country the issue that the free States shall admit that slaves are property, and treat them as such, or else there will be a secession."[23]

Nevertheless, the Republican senators of the committee of thirteen, inspired by the firm attitude of Lincoln, voted against the first resolution of the Crittenden compromise. They consented that Congress should have no power either to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia without compen-

[20] William Salter, *Life of James W. Grimes*, p. 132. Letter of December 16, 1860.

[21] New York *Tribune*, December 24, 1860.

[22] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 485.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 486.

sation and the consent of its inhabitants, or to prohibit the transportation of slaves between slave-holding States and territories; but they refused to protect slavery south of the Missouri line, especially since such an amendment, by including future acquisitions of territory, would, as Lincoln declared, popularise filibustering for all south of us. "A year will not pass till we shall have to take Cuba as a condition upon which they will stay in the Union."[24]

Upon the failure of the Crittenden compromise, Seward, on the part of the Republicans, offered five propositions, declaring (1) that the Constitution should never be altered so as to authorise Congress to abolish or interfere with slavery in the States; (2) that the fugitive slave law should be amended by granting a jury trial to the fugitive; (3) that Congress recommend the repeal by the States of personal liberty acts which contravene the Constitution or the laws; (4) that Congress pass an efficient law for the punishment of all persons engaged in the armed invasion of any State from another; and (5) to admit into the Union the remaining territory belonging to the United States as two States, one north and one south of the parallel of 36° 30′, with the provision that these States might be subdivided and new ones erected therefrom whenever there should be sufficient population for one representative in Congress upon sixty thousand square miles.[25] Only the first of these articles was adopted. Southern Democrats objected to the second on principle, and to the third on the ground that it would affect their laws imprisoning coloured seamen, while they defeated the fourth by amending it into Douglas' suggestion for the revival of the sedition law of John Adams' administration.[26] This made it unacceptable to the Republicans. The fifth failed because it gave the South no opportunity of acquiring additional slave lands. On December 28, therefore, the committee, after adopting a resolution that it could not agree, closed its labours.

[24] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 3, p. 288.
[25] Journal of the Committee of Thirteen, pp. 10, 13.
[26] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 484.

This seemed to Jefferson Davis, who, in 1860, had assumed the leadership laid down by John C. Calhoun in 1850, to end all effort at compromise, and, on January 10, 1861, in a carefully prepared speech, he argued the right of secession. Finally, turning to the Republicans, he said: "Your platform on which you elected your candidate denies us equality. Your votes refuse to recognise our domestic institutions which pre-existed the formation of the Union, our property which was guarded by the Constitution. You refuse us that equality without which we should be degraded if we remained in the Union. You elect a candidate upon the basis of sectional hostility; one who, in his speeches, now thrown broadcast over the country, made a distinct declaration of war upon our institutions. . . . What boots it to tell me that no direct act of aggression will be made? I prefer direct to indirect hostile measures which will produce the same result. I prefer it, as I prefer an open to a secret foe. Is there a senator upon the other side who to-day will agree that we shall have equal enjoyment of the territories of the United States? Is there one who will deny that we have equally paid in their purchases, and equally bled in their acquisition in war? Then, is this the observance of your contract? Whose is the fault if the Union be dissolved?"[27]

The country looked to Seward to make answer to these direct questions. Southern States were hurrying out of the Union. South Carolina had seceded on December 20, Mississippi on January 9, Florida on the 10th, and Alabama on the 11th. Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas were preparing to follow. The people felt that if a settlement was to come it must be made quickly. "Your propositions would have been most welcome if they had been made before any question of coercion, and before any vain boastings of powers," Davis had said. "But you did not make them when they would have been effective. I presume you will not make them now."[28]

If the position of the New York senator had been an embar-

[27] *Congressional Globe*, pp. 308, 309. [28] *Ibid.*, p. 307.

rassing one at the Astor House on December 22, it was much more difficult on January 12. He had refused to vote for the Crittenden compromise. Moreover, the only proposition he had to make stood rejected by the South. What could he say, therefore, that would settle anything? Yet the desire to hear him was intense. An eye-witness described the scene as almost unparalleled in the Senate. "By ten o'clock," wrote this observer, "every seat in the gallery was filled, and by eleven the cloak-rooms and all the passages were choked up, and a thousand men and women stood outside the doors, although the speech was not to begin until one o'clock. Several hundred visitors came on from Baltimore. It was the fullest house of the session, and by far the most respectful one."[29] Such was the faith of the South in Seward's unbounded influence with Northern senators and Northern people that the Richmond *Whig* asserted that his vote for the Crittenden compromise "would give peace at once to the country."[30]

Seward was not unmindful of this influence. "My own party trusts me," he wrote, "but not without reservation. All the other parties, North and South, cast themselves upon me."[31] Judged by his letters at this period, it is suggested that he had an overweening sense of his own importance; he thought that he held in his hands the destinies of his country.[32] However this may be, it is certain that he wanted to embarrass Lincoln by no obstacles of his making. "I must

[29] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 493.

[30] The Richmond *Whig*, January 17, 1861.

[31] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 494.

[32] "I will try to save freedom and my country," Seward wrote his wife.—F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 487. "I have assumed a sort of dictatorship for defence, and am labouring night and day with the cities and States."—*Ibid.*, 491. "I am the only hopeful, calm, conciliatory person."—*Ibid.*, 497. "It seems to me that if I am absent only three days, this Administration, the Congress, and the district would fall into consternation and despair."—*Ibid.*, 497. "The present Administration and the incoming one unite in devolving upon me the responsibility of averting civil war."—*Ibid.*, 497.

gain time," he said, "for the new Administration to organise and for the frenzy of passion to subside. I am doing this without making any compromise whatever, by forbearance, conciliation, magnanimity. What I say and do is said and done, not in view of personal objects, and I am leaving to posterity to decide upon my action and conduct."[33]

In this spirit Seward made his speech of January 12. He discussed the fallacies of secession, showing that it had no grounds, or even excuse, and declaring that disunion must lead to civil war. Then he avowed his adherence to the Union in its integrity and in every event, "whether of peace or of war, with every consequence of honour or dishonour, of life or death." Referring to the disorder, he said: "I know not to what extent it may go. Still my faith in the Constitution and in the Union abides. Whatever dangers there shall be, there will be the determination to meet them. Whatever sacrifices, private or public, shall be needful for the Union, they will be made. I feel sure that the hour has not come for this great nation to fall."

In blazing the new line of thought which characterised his speech at the Astor House, Seward rose to the plane of higher patriotism, and he now broadened and enlarged the idea. During the presidential campaign, he said, the struggle had been for and against slavery. That contest having ended by the success of the Republicans in the election, the struggle was now for and against the Union. "Union is not more the body than liberty is the soul of the nation. Freedom can be saved with the Union, and cannot be saved without it." He deprecated mutual criminations and recriminations, a continuance of the debate over slavery in the territories, the effort to prove secession illegal, and the right of the federal government to coerce seceding States. He wanted the Union glorified, its blessings exploited, the necessity of its existence made manifest, and the love of country substituted for the prejudice of faction and the pride of party. When this millennial day had come, when secession movements had ended

[33] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 497.

and the public mind had resumed its wonted calm, then a national convention might be called—say, in one, two, or three years hence, to consider the matter of amending the Constitution.[34]

This speech was listened to with deep attention. "During the delivery of portions of it," said one correspondent, "senators were in tears. When the sad picture of the country, divided into confederacies, was given, Mr. Crittenden, who sat immediately before the orator, was completely overcome by his emotions, and bowed his white head to weep."[35] The *Tribune* considered it "rhetorically and as a literary performance unsurpassed by any words of Seward's earlier productions,"[36] and Whittier, charmed with its conciliatory tone, paid its author a noble tribute in one of his choicest poems.[37] But

[34] New York *Tribune*, January 14, 1861. *Seward's Works*, Vol. 4, p. 651.

[35] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 494.

[36] New York *Tribune* (editorial), January 14, 1861.

[37] TO WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

"Statesman, I thank thee!—and if yet dissent
Mingles, reluctant, with my large content,
I can not censure what was nobly meant.
But while constrained to hold even Union less
Than Liberty, and Truth, and Righteousness,
I thank thee, in the sweet and holy name
Of Peace, for wise, calm words, that put to shame
Passion and party. Courage may be shown
Not in defiance of the wrong alone;
He may be bravest, who, unweaponed, bears
The olive branch, and strong in justice spares
The rash wrong-doer, giving widest scope
To Christian charity, and generous hope.
If without damage to the sacred cause
Of Freedom, and the safeguard of its laws—
If, without yielding that for which alone
We prize the Union, thou canst save it now,
From a baptism of blood, upon thy brow
A wreath whose flowers no earthly soil has known
Woven of the beatitudes, shall rest;
And the peace-maker be forever blest!"

the country was disappointed. The Richmond *Enquirer*, representing the Virginia secessionists, maintained that it destroyed the last hope of compromise, because he gave up nothing, not even prejudices, to save peace in the Union. For the same reason, Union men of Kentucky and other border States turned from it with profound grief. On the other hand, the radical Republicans, disappointed that it did not contain more powder and shot, charged him with surrendering his principles and those of his party, to avert civil war and dissolution of the Union. But the later-day historian, however, readily admits that the rhetorical words of this admirable speech had an effectual influence in making fidelity to the Union, irrespective of previous party affiliations, a rallying point for Northern men.

As the recognised representative of the President-elect, Seward now came into frequent conference with loyal men of both sections and of all parties, including General Scott and the new members of Buchanan's Cabinet. John A. Dix had become secretary of the treasury, Edwin Stanton attorney-general, and Jeremiah S. Black secretary of state. Seward knew them intimately, and with Black he conferred publicly. With Stanton, however, it seemed advisable to select midnight as the hour and a basement as the place of conference. "At length," he wrote Lincoln, "I have gotten a position in which I can see what is going on in the councils of the President."[38] To his wife, he adds: "The revolution gathers apace. It has its abettors in the White House, the treasury, the interior. I have assumed a sort of dictatorship for defence."[39] He advised the President-elect to reach Washington somewhat earlier than usual, and suggested having his secretaries of war and navy designated that they might co-operate in measures for the public safety. Under his advice, on the theory that the national emblem would strengthen wavering minds and develop Union sentiment, flags began to appear on stores and private residences. Sew-

[38] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 488.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 490.

ard was ablaze with zeal. "Before I spoke," he wrote Weed, "not one utterance made for the Union elicited a response. Since I spoke, every word for the Union brings forth a cheering response."[40]

But, amidst it all, Seward's enemies persistently charged him with inclining to the support of the Crittenden compromise. "We have positive information from Washington," declared the *Tribune*, "that a compromise on the basis of Mr. Crittenden's is sure to be carried through Congress either this week or the next, provided a very few more Republicans can be got to enlist in the enterprise. . . . Weed goes with the Breckenridge Democrats. . . . The same is true, though less decidedly, of Seward."[41] It is probable that in the good-fellowship of after-dinner conversations Seward's optimistic words and "mysterious allusions,"[42] implied more than he intended them to convey, but there is not a private letter or public utterance on which to base the *Tribune's* statements. Greeley's attacks, however, became frequent now. Having at last swung round to the "no compromise"

[40] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 497.

"In regard to February, 1861, I need only say that I desired to avoid giving the secession leaders the excuse and opportunity to open the civil war before the new Administration and new Congress could be in authority to subdue it. I conferred throughout with General Scott, and Mr. Stanton, then in Mr. Buchanan's Cabinet. I presume I conversed with others in a way that seemed to me best calculated to leave the inauguration of a war to the secessionists, and to delay it, in any case, until the new Administration should be in possession of the Government. On the 22d of February, in concert with Mr. Stanton, I caused the United States flag to be displayed throughout all the northern and western portions of the United States." Letters of W. H. Seward, June 13, 1867.—William Schouler, *Massachusetts in the Civil War*, Vol. 1, pp. 41, 42.

[41] New York *Tribune*, January 29 and February 6, 1861.

[42] A writer in the *North American Review* (August, 1879, p. 135) speaks of the singular confidence of Siddon of Virginia (afterwards secretary of war of the Southern Confederacy) in Mr. Seward, and the mysterious allusions to the skilful plans maturing for an adjustment of sectional difficulties.

policy of the radical wing of his party, he found it easy to condemn the attitude of Weed and the Unionism of Seward, against whom his lieutenants at Albany were waging a fierce battle for his election as United States senator.

On January 31, Seward had occasion to present a petition, with thirty-eight thousand signatures, which William E. Dodge and other business men of New York had brought to Washington, praying for "the exercise of the best wisdom of Congress in finding some plan for the adjustment of the troubles which endanger the safety of the nation," and in laying it before the Senate he took occasion to make another plea for the Union. "I have asked them," he said, "that at home they act in the same spirit, and manifest their devotion to the Union, above all other interests, by speaking for the Union, by voting for the Union, by lending and giving their money for the Union, and, in the last resort, fighting for the Union—taking care, always, that speaking goes before voting, voting goes before giving money, and all go before a battle. This is the spirit in which I have determined for myself to come up to this great question, and to pass through it."

Senator Mason of Virginia, declaring that "a maze of generalities masked the speech," pressed Seward as to what he meant by "contributing money for the Union." Seward replied: "I have recommended to them in this crisis, that they sustain the government of this country with the credit to which it is entitled at their hands." To this Mason said: "I took it for granted that the money was to sustain the army which was to conduct the fight that he recommends to his people." Seward responded: "If, then, this Union is to stand or fall by the force of arms, I have advised my people to do, as I shall be ready to do myself—stand with it or perish with it." To which the Virginia Senator retorted: "The honourable senator proposes but one remedy to restore this Union, and that is the *ultima ratio regna.*" Seward answered quickly, "Not to restore—preserve!"

Mason then referred to Seward's position as one of battle

and bloodshed, to be fought on Southern soil, for the purpose of reducing the South to colonies. To Seward, who was still cultivating the attitude of "forbearance, conciliation, and magnanimity," this sounded like a harsh conclusion of the position he had sought to sugar-coat with much rhetoric, and, in reply, he pushed bloodshed into the far-off future by restating what he had already declared in fine phrases, closing as follows: "Does not the honourable senator know that when all these [suggestions for compromise] have failed, then the States of this Union, according to the forms of the Constitution, shall take up this controversy about twenty-four negro slaves scattered over a territory of one million and fifty thousand square miles, and say whether they are willing to sacrifice all this liberty, all this greatness, and all this hope, because they have not intelligence, wisdom, and virtue enough to adjust a controversy so frivolous and contemptible."[43]

Seward's speech plainly indicated a purpose to fight for the preservation of the Union, and his talk of first exhausting conciliatory methods was accepted in the South simply as a "resort to the gentle powers of seduction,"[44] but his argument of the few slaves in the great expanse of territory sounded so much like Weed, who was advocating with renewed strength the Crittenden plan along similar lines of devotion to the Union, that it kept alive in the North the impression that the Senator would yet favour compromise, and gave Greeley further opportunity to assail him. "Seward, in his speech on Thursday last," says the *Tribune*, "declares his readiness to renounce Republican principles for the sake of the Union."[45] The next day his strictures were more pronounced. "The Republican party . . . is to be divided and sacrificed if the thing can be done. We are boldly

[43] W. H. Seward, *Works of*, Vol. 4, p. 670. *Congressional Globe*, 1861, p. 657.

[44] "Oily Gammon Seward, aware that intimidation will not do, is going to resort to the gentle powers of seduction."—Washington correspondent of Charleston *Mercury*, February 19, 1861.

[45] New York *Tribune*, February 4, 1861.

told it must be suppressed, and a Union party rise upon its ruins."[46] Yet, in spite of such criticism, Seward bore himself with indomitable courage and with unfailing skill. Never during his whole career did he prove more brilliant and resourceful as a leader in what might be called an utterly hopeless parliamentary struggle for the preservation of the Union, and the highest tributes[47] paid to his never-failing tact and temper during some of the most vivid and fascinating passages of congressional history, attest his success. It was easy to say, with Senator Chandler of Michigan, that "without a little blood-letting this Union will not be worth a rush,"[48] but it required great skill to speak for the preservation of the Union and the retention of the corner-stone of the Republican party, without grieving the Unionists of the border States, or painfully affecting the radical Republicans of the Northern States. Seward knew that the latter censured him, and in a letter to the *Independent* he explains the cause of it. "Twelve years ago," he wrote, "freedom was in danger and the Union was not. I spoke then so singly for freedom that short-sighted men inferred that I was disloyal to the Union. To-day, practically, freedom is not in danger, and Union is. With the attempt to maintain Union by civil war, *wantonly* brought on, there would be danger of reaction against the Administration charged with the preservation of both freedom and Union. Now, therefore, I speak singly for Union, striving, if possible, to save it peaceably; if not possible, then to cast the

[46] New York *Tribune*, February 5, 1861.

[47] "I have rejoiced, as you of New York must certainly have done, in the spirit of conciliation which has repeatedly been manifested, during the present session of Congress, by your distinguished senator, Governor Seward." Robert C. Winthrop to the Constitutional Union Committee of Troy, February 17.—*Winthrop's Addresses and Speeches*, Vol. 2, p. 701. "If Mr. Seward moves in favour of compromise, the whole Republican party sways like a field of grain before his breath." Letter of Oliver Wendell Holmes, February 16, 1861.—*Motley's Correspondence*, Vol. 1, p. 360.

[48] Detroit *Post and Tribune; Life of Zachariah Chandler*, p. 189.

responsibility upon the party of slavery. For this singleness of speech I am now suspected of infidelity to freedom."[49]

Lincoln, after his arrival in Washington, asked Seward to suggest such changes in his inaugural address as he thought advisable, and in the performance of this delicate duty the New York Senator continued his policy of conciliation. "I have suggested," he wrote, in returning the manuscript, "many changes of little importance, severally, but in their general effect, tending to soothe the public mind. Of course the concessions are, as they ought to be, if they are to be of avail, at the cost of the winning, the triumphant party. I do not fear their displeasure. They will be loyal whatever is said. Not so the defeated, irritated, angered, frenzied party. . . . Your case is quite like that of Jefferson. He brought the first Republican party into power against and over a party ready to resist and dismember the government. Partisan as he was, he sank the partisan in the patriot, in his inaugural address; and propitiated his adversaries by declaring, 'We are all Federalists; all Republicans.' I could wish that you would think it wise to follow this example, in this crisis. Be sure that while all your administrative conduct will be in harmony with Republican principles and policy, you cannot lose the Republican party by practising, in your advent to office, the magnanimity of a victor."[50]

Of thirty-four changes suggested by Seward, the President-elect adopted twenty-three outright, and based modifications on eight others. Three were ignored. Upon only one change did the Senator really insist. He thought the two paragraphs relating to the Republican platform adopted at Chicago should be omitted, and, in obedience to his judgment, Lincoln left them out. Seward declared the argument of the address strong and conclusive, and ought not in any way be changed or modified, "but something besides, or in addition

[49] Letter to Dr. Thompson of the New York *Independent*. F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 507.

[50] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 512.

to argument, is needful," he wrote in a postscript, "to meet and remove *prejudice* and *passion* in the South, and *despondency* and *fear* in the East. Some words of affection. Some of calm and cheerful confidence."[51] In line with this suggestion, he submitted the draft of two concluding paragraphs. The first, "made up of phrases which had become extremely commonplace by iteration in the six years' slavery discussion," was clearly inadmissible.[52] The second was as follows: "I close. We are not, we must not be, aliens or enemies, but fellow countrymen and brethren. Although passion has strained our bonds of affection too hardly, they must not, I am sure they will not, be broken. The mystic chords which, proceeding from so many battle-fields and so many patriot graves, pass through all the hearts and all the hearths in this broad continent of ours, will yet again harmonise in their ancient music when breathed upon by the guardian angel of the nation."

This was the germ of a fine poetic thought, says John Hay, that "Mr. Lincoln took, and, in a new development and perfect form, gave to it the life and spirit and beauty which have made it celebrated." As it appears in the President-elect's clear, firm handwriting, it reads as follows: "I am loth to close. We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."[53]

[51] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 3, p. 513.

[52] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 3, p. 343, *note*.

[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 343, 344, and *note*.

For facsimile of the paragraph as written by Seward and rewritten by Lincoln, see *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 336. For the entire address, with all suggested and adopted changes, see *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, pp. 327 to 344.

At Seward's dinner table on the evening of March 4, the peroration of the inaugural address was especially commended by

The spirit that softened Lincoln's inaugural into an appeal that touched every heart, had breathed into the debates of Congress the conciliation and forbearance that marked the divide between the conservative and radical Republican. This difference, at the last moment, occasioned Lincoln much solicitude. He had come to Washington with his Cabinet completed except as to a secretary of the treasury and a secretary of war. For the latter place Seward preferred Simon Cameron, and, in forcing the appointment by his powerful advocacy, he dealt a retributive blow to Governor Curtin of Pennsylvania, who had vigorously opposed him at Chicago and was now the most conspicuous of Cameron's foes.[54] But Senator Chase of Ohio, to whom Seward strenuously objected because of his uncompromising attitude, was given the treasury. The shock of this defeat led the New York Senator to decline entering the Cabinet. "Circumstances which have occurred since I expressed my willingness to accept the office of secretary of state," he wrote, on March 2,

A. Oakey Hall, afterward mayor of New York, who quickly put it into rhyme:

"The mystic chords of Memory
That stretch from patriot graves;
From battle-fields to living hearts,
Or hearth-stones freed from slaves,
An Union chorus shall prolong,
And grandly, proudly swell,
When by those better angels touched
Who in all natures dwell."

[54] "Seward and his friends were greatly offended at the action of Curtin at Chicago. I was chairman of the Lincoln state committee and fighting the pivotal struggle of the national battle, but not one dollar of assistance came from New York, and my letters to Thurlow Weed and to Governor Morgan, chairman of the national committee, were unanswered. Seward largely aided the appointment of a Cabinet officer in Pennsylvania, who was the most conspicuous of Curtin's foes, and on Curtin's visit to Seward as secretary of state, he gave him such a frigid reception that he never thereafter called at that department."—Alex. K. McClure, *Recollections of Half a Century*, p. 220.

"seem to me to render it my duty to ask leave to withdraw that consent."[55]

The reception of the unexpected note sent a shiver through Lincoln's stalwart form. This was the man of men with whom for weeks he had confidentially conferred, and upon whose judgment and information he had absolutely relied and acted. "I cannot afford to let Seward take the first trick," he said to his secretary,[56] after pondering the matter during Sunday, and on Monday morning, while the inauguration procession was forming, he penned a reply. "Your note," he said, "is the subject of the most painful solicitude with me; and I feel constrained to beg that you will countermand the withdrawal. The public interest, I think, demands that you should; and my personal feelings are deeply enlisted in the same direction. Please consider and answer by nine o'clock a. m. to-morrow." That night, after the day's pageant and the evening's reception had ended, the President and Seward talked long and confidentially, resulting in the latter's withdrawal of his letter and his nomination and confirmation as secretary of state. "The President is determined that he will have a compound Cabinet," Seward wrote his wife, a few days after the unhappy incident; "and that it shall be peaceful, and even permanent. I was at one time on the point of refusing—nay, I did refuse, for a time, to hazard myself in the experiment. But a distracted country appeared before me, and I withdrew from that position. I believe I can endure as much as any one; and may be that I can endure enough to make the experiment successful."[57]

[55] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 3, p. 370.
[56] *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 371.
[57] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 518.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WEED MACHINE CRIPPLED

1861

The story of the first forty days of Lincoln's administration is one of indecent zeal to obtain office. A new party had come into power, and, in the absence of any suggestion of civil service, patronage was conceded to the political victors. Office-seekers in large numbers had visited Washington in 1841 after the election of President Harrison, and, in the change that followed the triumph of Taylor in 1848, Seward, then a new senator, complained of their pernicious activity. Marcy as secretary of state found them no less numerous and insistent in 1853 when the Whigs again gave way to the Democrats. But never in the history of the country had such a cloud of applicants settled down upon the capital of the nation as appeared in 1861. McClure, an eye-witness of the scene, speaks of the "mobs of office-seekers,"[1] and Edwin M. Stanton, who still remained in Washington, wrote Buchanan that "the scramble for office is terrific. Every department is overrun, and by the time all the patronage is distributed the Republican party will be dissolved."[2] Schuyler Colfax declared to his mother that "it makes me heart-sick. All over the country our party is by the ears, fighting for offices."[3] Seward, writing to his wife on March 16, speaks of the affliction. "My duties call me to the White House one, two, or three times a day. The grounds, halls, stairways, closets, are filled with applicants, who render ingress and

[1] Alex. K. McClure, *Recollections of Half a Century*, p. 204.
[2] George T. Curtis, *Life of James Buchanan*, Vol. 2, p. 530.
[3] O. B. Hallister, *Life of Colfax*, p. 173.

egress difficult."[4] Lincoln himself said: "I seem like one sitting in a palace, assigning apartments to importunate applicants, while the structure is on fire and likely soon to perish in ashes."[5] Stanton is authority for the statement "that Lincoln takes the precaution of seeing no stranger alone."[6]

In this bewildering mass of humanity New York had its share. Seward sought protection behind his son, Frederick W. Seward, whom the President had appointed assistant secretary of state. "I have placed him where he must meet the whole army of friends seeking office," he wrote his wife on March 8—"an hundred taking tickets when only one can draw a prize."[7] Roscoe Conkling, then beginning his second term in Congress, needed no barrier of this kind. "Early in the year 1861," says his biographer, "a triumvirate of Republicans assumed to designate candidates for the offices which President Lincoln was about to fill in the Oneida district. To accomplish this end they went to Washington and called upon their representative, handing him a list of candidates to endorse for appointment. Mr. Conkling read it carefully, and, seeing that it contained undesirable names, he replied: 'Gentlemen, when I need your assistance in making the appointments in our district, I shall let you know.' This retort, regarded by some of his friends as indiscreet, was the seed that years afterward ripened into an unfortunate division of the Republican party."[8]

If Seward was more tactful than Conkling in the dispensa-

[4] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 530.

[5] Alex. K. McClure, *Life of Lincoln*, p. 56.

[6] George T. Curtis, *Life of James Buchanan*, Vol. 2, p. 530.

A writer in the *North American Review* says, "the clamour for offices is already quite extraordinary, and these poor people undoubtedly belong to the horde which has pressed in here seeking places under the new Administration, which neither has nor can hope to have places enough to satisfy one-twentieth the number." November, 1879, p. 488.

[7] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 518.

[8] A. R. Conkling, *Life and Letters of Roscoe Conkling*, pp. 119, 120.

tion of patronage, he was not less vigilant and tenacious. Almost immediately after inauguration it became apparent that differences relative to local appointments existed between him and Ira Harris, the newly elected New York senator. Harris' tall and powerful form, distinguished by a broad and benevolent face, was not more marked than the reputation that preceded him as a profound and fearless judge. At the Albany bar he had been the associate of Marcus T. Reynolds, Samuel Stevens, Nicholas Hill, and the venerable Daniel Cady, and if he did not possess the wit of Reynolds or the eloquence of Cady, the indomitable energy of Stevens and the mental vigour of Nicholas Hill were his, making conspicuous his achievements in the pursuit of truth and justice. His transfer to the Senate at the age of fifty-eight and his appointment upon the judiciary and foreign relations committees, presented a new opportunity to exhibit his deep and fruitful interest in public affairs, and, as the friend of Senators Collamer of Vermont and Sumner of Massachusetts, he was destined to have an influential share in the vital legislation of the war period.

Harris took little interest in the distribution of patronage, or in questions of party politics that quicken local strife, but he insisted upon a fair recognition of his friends, and to adjust their differences Seward arranged an evening conference to which the President was invited. At this meeting the discussion took a broad range. The secretary of state had prepared a list covering the important offices in New York, but before he could present it, Lincoln, with the ready intuitions of a shrewd politician, remarked that he reserved to himself the privilege of appointing Hiram Barney collector of the port of New York. This announcement did not surprise Seward, for, at the conclusion of Weed's visit to Springfield in the preceding December, Lincoln reminded the journalist that he had said nothing about appointments. "Some gentlemen who have been quite nervous about the object of your visit here," said the President-elect, "would be surprised, if not incredulous, were I to tell them that

during the two days we have passed together you have made no application, suggestion, or allusion to political appointments."

To this the shrewd manager, willing to wait until Seward's appointment and confirmation as secretary of state had placed him in a position to direct rather than to beg patronage, replied that nothing of that nature had been upon his mind, since he was much more concerned about the welfare of the country. "This," said Lincoln, "is undoubtedly a proper view of the question, and yet so much were you misunderstood that I have received telegrams from prominent Republicans warning me against your efforts to forestall important appointments in your State. Other gentlemen who have visited me since the election have expressed similar apprehensions." The President, thus cunningly leading up to what was on his mind, said further that it was particularly pleasant to him to reflect that he was coming into office unembarrassed by promises. "I have not," said he, "promised an office to any man, nor have I, but in a single instance, mentally committed myself to an appointment; and as that relates to an important office in your State, I have concluded to mention it to you—under strict injunctions of secrecy, however. If I am not induced by public considerations to change my purpose, Hiram Barney will be collector of the port of New York."[9]

To Weed, Barney's name aroused no agreeable memories. At the formation of the Republican party he had found it easier to affiliate with Lucius Robinson and David Dudley Field than to act in accord with the Whig leader, and the result at Chicago had emphasised this independence. Too politic, however, to antagonise the appointment, and too wary to indorse it, Weed replied that prior to the Chicago convention he had known Barney very slightly, but that, if what he had learned of him since was true, Barney was entitled to any office he asked for. "He has not asked for this

[9] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 612.

or any other office," said Lincoln, quickly; "nor does he know of my intention."[10]

If the President-elect failed to draw out the adroit New Yorker, he had tactfully given notice of his intention not to be controlled by him. A political boss, outside his own State, usually bears the reputation that home opponents give him, and, although Weed was never so bad as painted by his adversaries, he had long been a chief with an odious notoriety. Apparently disinterested, and always refusing to seek or to accept office himself, he loved power, and for years, whenever Whig or Republican party was ascendant in New York, his ambition to prescribe its policy, direct its movements, and dictate the men who might hold office, had been discreetly but imperiously exercised, until his influence was viewed with abhorrence by many and with distrust by the country.[11] It is doubtful if Lincoln's opinion corresponded with the accepted one,[12] but his desire to have some avenue of informa-

[10] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, pp. 612, 613.

[11] Gideon Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, p. 22.

"In pecuniary matters Weed was generous to a fault while poor; he is said to be less so since he became rich. . . . I cannot doubt, however, that if he had never seen Wall Street or Washington, had never heard of the Stock Board, and had lived in some yet undiscovered country, where legislation is never bought nor sold, his life would have been more blameless, useful, and happy. I was sitting beside him in his editorial room soon after Governor Seward's election, when he opened a letter from a brother Whig, which ran substantially thus: 'Dear Weed: I want to be a bank examiner. You know how to fix it. Do so, and draw on me for whatever sum you may see fit. Yours truly.' In an instant his face became prematurely black with mingled rage and mortification. 'My God,' said he, 'I knew that my political adversaries thought me a scoundrel, but I never till now supposed that my friends did.' "—Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life*, pp. 312, 313.

[12] President Lincoln looked to Mr. Weed for counsel, when, as often during the war, he met with difficulties hard to surmount. It was Mr. Lincoln's habit at such times to telegraph Mr. Weed to come to Washington from Albany or New York, perhaps at an hour's notice. He often spent the day with the President, com-

tion respecting New York affairs opened to him other than through the Weed machine, made the President bold to declare his independence at the outset.

The immediate influence that led to the announcement of Barney's selection, however, is not entirely clear. At the Cooper Institute meeting in February, 1860, at which Lincoln spoke, Barney occupied a seat on the stage, and was among the few gentlemen having opportunity to pay the distinguished Illinoisan those courtesies which especially please one who felt, as Lincoln did "by reason of his own modest estimate of himself,"[13] that he was under obligation to any person showing him marked attention. But neither this fact nor Barney's subsequent support at Chicago sufficiently accounts for the strong preference indicated by such an important and far-reaching appointment. Among the few indorsements on file in the treasury department at Washington, one letter, dated March 8, 1861, and addressed to Salmon P. Chase, speaks of Barney as "a personal friend of yours." Six days later a New York newspaper announced that "the appointment of Barney has been a fixed fact ever since Chase went into the Cabinet. It was this influence that persuaded Chase to accept the position."[14] The biographer of Thurlow Weed, probably basing the statement upon the belief of Weed himself, states, without qualification, that "Barney was appointed through the influence of Secretary Chase."[15] This may, in part, account for Weed's and Seward's bitter hostility to the Ohioan's becoming a member of the Cabinet; for, if Chase, before his appointment as secretary of the treasury, had sufficient influence to control the principal federal office in New York, what, might they not have asked, would be the measure of this influence after the development of his

ing and returning by night, regardless of his age and infirmities. His services in these exigencies were often invaluable."—Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 288.

[13] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2, p. 217.

[14] New York *Herald*, March 14, 1861.

[15] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 613.

great ability as a financier has made him necessary to the President as well as to the country?

Inquiry, however, as to the one first suggesting Barney's name to Lincoln does not lead to the open. Chase's entrance into the Cabinet being settled, his influence firmly sustained Barney, but, before that, very early after the election, between November 7 and Weed's visit to Springfield on December 17, some one spoke the word in Barney's behalf which left such a deep and lasting impression upon the President's mind that he determined to advise Weed, before Seward could accept the state portfolio, of his intention to appoint Barney collector of the port of New York. The name of the person exerting such an influence, however, is now unknown. During this period Chase neither saw the President-elect, nor, so far as the records show, wrote him more than a formal note of congratulations. Another possible avenue of communication may have been Bryant or Greeley, but the latter distinctly denied that he asked, or wanted, or manipulated the appointment of any one.[16] Bryant, who had great influence with Lincoln,[17] and who strongly opposed Seward's going into the Cabinet,[18] had presided at the Cooper Institute meeting and sat beside Hiram Barney. He knew that such a man, placed at the head of the custom-house and wielding its vast patronage, could be a potent factor in breaking Weed's control, but the editor's only published letter to Lincoln during this period was confined to reasons for making Chase secretary of state. In it he did not deprecate the strengthening of the Weed machine which would probably ignore the original New York supporters of Lincoln, or in any wise refer to local matters. Bryant had been partial to Chase for President until after Lincoln's Cooper Institute speech, and now, after election, he thought Chase, as secre-

[16] New York *Tribune*, editorial, April 2, 1861.

[17] "'It was worth the journey to the East,' said Mr. Lincoln, 'to see such a man as Bryant,'"—John Bigelow, *Life of William Cullen Bryant*, p. 218.

[18] Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 3, p. 257.

tary of state, would be best for the country. Lincoln's reply of "a few lines," convincing his correspondent "that whatever selection you make it will be made conscientiously," contained no word about Barney. Other letters, or parties personally interested in Barney, may have passed between the President-elect and Bryant, or Chase. Indeed, Lincoln confessed to Weed that he had received telegrams and visits from prominent Republicans, warning him against the Albany editor's efforts to forestall important state appointments, but no clue is left to identify them. The mystery deepens, too, since, whatever was done, came without Barney's suggestion or knowledge.[19]

Hiram Barney, a native of Jefferson County, a graduate of Union College in 1834, and the head of a well-known law firm, was a lawyer of high character and a Republican of Democratic antecedents, who had stood with Greeley and Bryant in opposing Seward at Chicago, and whose appointment to the most important federal office in the State meant mischief for Weed.[20] In its effect it was not unlike President Garfield's selection of William H. Robertson for the same place; and, although it did not at once result so disastrously to Weed as Robertson's appointment did to Conkling twenty years later, it gave the editor's adversaries vantage ground,

[19] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 613.

[20] "Hiram Barney belongs to the Van Buren Democratic Buffalo Free-soil wing of the Republican party. He studied law with C. C. Cambreling and practised it with Benjamin F. Butler. For President he voted for Jackson, for Van Buren in 1840 and 1848, for Hale in 1852, and for Fremont and Lincoln. He was also a delegate to the Buffalo convention of 1848; so that as an out-and-out Van Buren Democratic Free-soil Republican, Barney is a better specimen than Van Buren himself."—New York *Herald*, March 28, 1861.

"Mr. Barney's quiet, unostentatious bearing has deprived him of the notoriety which attaches to most of our politicians of equal experience and influence. Nevertheless, he is well known to the Republican party and universally respected as one of its foremost and most intelligent supporters."—New York *Evening Post*, March 27, 1861.

which so seriously crippled the Weed machine, that, in the succeeding November, George Opdyke, a personal enemy of Thurlow Weed,[21] was nominated and elected mayor of New York City.

At the conference of the President and New York senators, Seward, accepting the inevitable, received Lincoln's announcement of Barney's appointment in chilling silence. Without openly disclosing itself, the proposed step had been the cause of much friction, and was yet to be opposed with coolness and candour,[22] but Lincoln's firmness in declaring that Barney was a man of integrity who had his confidence, and that he had made the appointment on his own responsibility and from personal knowledge,[23] impressed his hearers with the belief that, with whatever disfavour Seward listened, he had practically surrendered to the will of his superior. Another scene occurred, as the interview proceeded, which also indicated the master spirit. After reviewing the extended list of names presented for collectors and other officers, Seward expressed the wish that the nominations might be sent forthwith to the Senate. The embarrassed senators, unprepared for such haste, found in the secretary of the navy, who had accompanied the President on the latter's invitation, a ready opponent to such a plan because other members of the Cabinet had been wholly ignored. Welles inquired if the secretary of the treasury and attorney-general had been consulted, insisting that a proper administration of the departments made their concurrence in the selection of competent subordinates upon whom they must rely, not only proper but absolutely necessary. Seward objected to this as unnecessary, for these were New York appointments, he said, and he knew better than Chase and Bates what was best in that State for the party and the Administration. The President,

[21] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 1, p. 528; *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 322.

[22] "Strong protests against Barney have been received within the last twenty-four hours."—New York *Herald*, March 14, 1861.

[23] Gideon Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, p. 72.

however, agreed with the secretary of the navy, declaring that nothing conclusive would be done until he had advised with interested heads of departments. "With this," says Welles, "the meeting soon and somewhat abruptly terminated."[24] So far as it related to the distribution of patronage, this conference, held early in March, settled nothing beyond Barney's appointment; as to the question whether Seward was President or Premier, however, the New Yorker soon learned that he was to have influence with his chief only by reason of his assiduous attention to the public business and his dexterity and tact in promoting the views of the President.[25]

To the outsider, the appointment of Barney looked, for the moment, like a substantial defeat for Seward. "The mighty struggle," said the *Herald*, "is for the possession of the New York appointments, and the strife is deadly and bitter."[26] The anti-Weed forces, reinforced by the arrival of Greeley,[27] the coming of Barney,[28] and the persistence of Harris,[29] were elated over reported changes in the Weed slate, believing the fruit of their long labours was about to come at last, but from the sum-total of the nominations, made day by day, it appeared that while several attachés of the *Tribune's* staff had been recognised,[30] Seward had secured all

[24] Gideon Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, p. 73.

[25] "Executive skill and vigour are rare qualities. The President is the best of us." Seward's letter to his wife.—F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 2, p. 590.

[26] New York *Herald*, March 30, 1861.

[27] "Thurlow Weed patched up the New York appointments and left this morning. Greeley arrived about the same time and has been sponging Weed's slate at an awful rate."—*Ibid.*, March 26.

[28] "Barney arrived this morning in response to a summons from the President and the secretary of the treasury."—*Ibid.*, April 1.

[29] "Senator Harris has proved himself more than a match for Weed."—*Ibid.*, April 4.

[30] Thus far four attachés of the *Tribune* have been appointed. . . . These appointments except the last were Mr. Lincoln's regardless of Mr. Seward, who bears the *Tribune* no love." —*Ibid.*, March 29.

the important offices save collector of the port.[31] During this turmoil the Secretary's unfailing calmness was not disturbed, nor his uniform courtesy ruffled.

Seward never forgot a real friend. Out of thirty-five diplomatic posts carrying a salary of five thousand dollars and upward, the Empire State was credited with nine; and, of these, one, a minister plenipotentiary, received twelve thousand dollars, and seven ministers resident, seventy-five hundred each. Seward, with the advice of Thurlow Weed, filled them all with tried and true supporters. Greeley, who, for some time, had been murmuring about the Secretary's appointments, let fly, at last, a sarcastic paragraph or two about the appointment of Andrew B. Dickinson, the farmer statesman of Steuben, which betrayed something of the bitterness existing between the Secretary of State and the editor of the *Tribune*. For more than a year no such thing had existed as personal relations. Before the spring of 1860 they met frequently with a show of cordiality, and, although the former understood that the latter boasted an independence of control whenever they differed in opinion, the *Tribune* co-operated and its editor freely conferred with the New York senator during the long struggle in Congress for Kansas and free labour; but after Seward's defeat at Chicago they never met,[32] dislike displaced regard, and the *Tribune*, with eye and ear open to catch whatever would make its adversary wince, indulged in bitter sarcasm. William B. Taylor's reappointment as postmaster at New York City gave it opportunity to praise Taylor and criticise Seward, claiming that the former, who had held office under

[31] "Seward secures all the important offices save the collectorship, which was given to Greeley."—New York *Herald*, March 30, 1861.

[32] "In the spring of 1859, Governor Seward crossed the Atlantic, visiting Egypt, traversing Syria, and other portions of Asia Minor as well as much of Europe. Soon after his return he came one evening to my seat in Dr. Chapin's church,—as he had repeatedly done during former visits to our city,—and I now recall this as the last occasion on which we ever met."—Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life*, p. 321.

Buchanan, though an excellent official, was not a Republican. This proved so deep a thrust, arraying office-seekers and their friends against the Secretary and Thurlow Weed, that Greeley kept it up, finding some appointees inefficient, and the Republicanism of others insufficient.

To the former class belonged the minister resident to Nicaragua. Dickinson had wearied of a farmer's life,[33] and Seward, who often benefited by his ardent and influential friendship, bade him make his own selection from the good things he had to offer. More than ordinary reasons existed why the Secretary desired to assist the Steuben farmer. Dickinson served in the State Senate throughout Seward's two terms as governor, and during these four years he had fearlessly and faithfully explained and defended Seward's recommendation of a division of the school fund, which proved so offensive to many thousand voters in New York. Indeed, it may be said with truth, that Seward's record on that one question did more to defeat him at Chicago than all his "irrepressible conflict" and "higher-law" declarations. It became the fulcrum of Curtin's and Lane's aggressive resistance, who claimed that, in the event of his nomination, the American or Know-Nothing element in Pennsylvania and Indiana would not only maintain its organisation, but

[33] "'Bray Dickinson,' as he was generally and familiarly called, whose early education was entirely neglected but whose perceptions and intuitions were clear and ready, was an enterprising farmer,—too enterprising, indeed, for he undertook more than he could accomplish. His ambition was to be the largest cattle and produce grower in his county (Steuben). If his whole time and thoughts had been given to farming, his anticipations might have been realised, but, as it was, he experienced the fate of those who keep too many irons in the fire. In 1839 he was elected to the State Senate, where for four years he was able, fearless, and inflexibly honest. On one occasion a senator from Westchester County criticised and ridiculed Dickinson's language. Dickinson immediately rejoined, saying that while his difficulty consisted in a want of suitable language with which to express his ideas, his colleague was troubled with a flood of words without any ideas to express."—Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 1, pp. 441, 442.

largely increase its strength, because of its strong prejudices against a division of the school fund.

Dickinson met this issue squarely. He followed the powerful Pennsylvanian and Indianian from delegation to delegation, explaining that Seward had sought simply to turn the children of poor foreigners into the path of moral and intellectual cultivation pursued by the American born,—a policy, he declared, in which all Republicans and Christian citizens should concur. He pictured school conditions in New York City in 1840, the date of Seward's historic message; he showed how prejudices arising from differences of language and religion kept schoolhouses empty and slum children ignorant, while reform schools and prisons were full. Under these circumstances, thundered the Steuben farmer, Seward did right in recommending the establishment of schools in which such children might be instructed by teachers speaking the same language with themselves, and professing the same faith.

This was the sort of defence Seward appreciated. His recommendation had not been the result of carelessness or inadvertence, and, although well-meaning friends sought to excuse it as such, he resented the insinuation. "I am only determined the more," he wrote, "to do what may be in my power to render our system of education as comprehensive as the interests involved, and to provide for the support of the glorious superstructure of universal suffrage,—the basis of universal education."[333a] In his defence, Dickinson maintained the excellence of Seward's suggestion, and it deeply angered the Steuben farmer that the *Tribune's* editor, who knew the facts as well as he, did not also attempt to silence the arguments of the two most influential Lincoln delegates, who boldly based their opposition, not upon personal hostility or his advanced position in Republican faith, but upon what Greeley had known for twenty years to be a perversion of Seward's language and Seward's motives.

In the Secretary's opinion Dickinson's bold defiance of

[333a] F. W. Seward, *Life of W. H. Seward*, Vol. 1, p. 503.

the rules of grammar and spelling did not weaken his natural intellectual strength; but Greeley, whom the would-be diplomat, with profane vituperation, had charged at Chicago with the basest ingratitude,[34] protested against such an appointment to such an important post. "We have long known him," said the *Tribune*, "as a skilful farmer, a cunning politician, and a hearty admirer of Mr. Seward, but never suspected him of that intimate knowledge of the Spanish language which is almost indispensable to that country, which, just at this moment, from the peculiar designs of the Southern rebels, is one of the most important that the secretary of state has to fill."[35] Dickinson recognised the odium that would attach to Seward because of the appointment, and in a characteristic letter he assured the Secretary of State that, whatever Greeley might say, he need have no fear of his ability to represent the government efficiently at the court of Nicaragua.[36]

James S. Pike's selection for minister resident to The Hague seemed to contradict Greeley's declaration that he neither asked nor desired the appointment of any one. For years Pike, "a skilful maligner of Mr. Seward,"[37] had been the Washington representative of the *Tribune*, and the belief generally obtained that, although Pike belonged to Maine and was supported by its delegation in Congress, the real power behind the throne lived in New York. Nevertheless, the *Tribune's* editor, drifting in thought and speech in the inevitable direction of his genius, soon indicated that he had had no personal favours to ask.

[34] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 273.

[35] New York *Tribune*, March 29, 1861.

[36] "Hornby, April 3, 1861. Dear Seward: I shall have to take a Gentleman with me that can speak the Spanish language and correct bad English. That being well done I can take care of the ballance Greeley to the contrary notwithstanding. . . . You have much at stake in my appointment as it is charged (and I know how justly) to your account."—Unpublished letter in files of State Department.

[37] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed*, Vol. 2, p. 326.

Seward's appointment as secretary of state chilled Greeley's love for the new Administration.[38] The *Tribune's* editor seems never to have shown an exalted appreciation of Abraham Lincoln. Although they served together in Congress, and, for twenty years, had held to the same political faith, Greeley, apparently indifferent to his colleague's success, advocated, in 1858, the return of Stephen A. Douglas to the United States Senate, because of his hostility to the Lecompton policy of the Buchanan administration, and it was intimated that this support, backed by his powerful journal, may have resulted in Douglas' carrying the Legislature against Lincoln. In 1860, Greeley favoured Bates for President. He was not displeased to have Lincoln nominated, but his battle had been to defeat Seward, and when Lincoln turned to Seward for secretary of state, which meant, as Greeley believed, the domination of the Weed machine to punish his revolt against Seward, Greeley became irretrievably embittered against the President.

It is doubtful if Lincoln and Greeley, under any circumstances, could have had close personal relations. Lack of sympathy because they did not see things alike must have kept them apart; but Seward's presence in the Cabinet undoubtedly limited Greeley's intercourse with the President at a time when frequent conferences might have avoided grave embarrassments. His virile and brilliant talents, which turned him into an independent and acute thinker on a wide range of subjects, always interested his readers, giving expression to the thoughts of many earnest men who aided in forming public opinion in their neighbourhoods, so that it may be said with truth, that, in 1860 and 1861, everything he wrote was eagerly read and discussed in the North. "Notwithstanding the loyal support given Lincoln throughout the country,"

[38] "I am charged with having opposed the selection of Governor Seward for a place in President Lincoln's Cabinet. That is utterly, absolutely false, the President himself being my witness. I might call many others, but one such is sufficient."—New York *Tribune*, signed editorial, July 25, 1861.

says McClure, "Greeley was in closer touch with the active, loyal sentiment of the people than even the President himself."[39] His art of saying things on paper seemed to thrill people as much as the nervous, spirited rhetoric of an intense talker. With the air of lofty detachment from sordid interests, his sentences, clear and rapid, read like the clarion notes of a peroration, and impressed his great audiences with an earnestness that often carried conviction even to unwilling listeners.

Nevertheless, the *Tribune's* columns did not manifest toward the Administration a fine exhibition of the love of fair play. In the hottest moment of excitement growing out of hostilities, it patriotically supported the most vigorous prosecution of the war, and mercilessly criticised its opponents; but Greeley would neither conform to nor silently endure Lincoln's judgment, and, as every step in the war created new issues, his constant criticism, made through the columns of a great newspaper, kept the party more or less seriously divided, until, by untimely forcing emancipation, he inspired, despite the patient and conciliatory methods of Lincoln, a factious hostility to the President which embarrassed his efforts to marshal a solid North in support of his war policy. Greeley was a man of clean hands and pure heart, and, at the outset, it is probable that his attempted direction of Lincoln's policy existed without ill-feeling; yet he was a good hater, and, as the contest went on, he drifted into an opposition which gradually increased in bitterness, and, finally, led to a temporary and foolish rebellion against the President's renomination. Meantime, the great-hearted Lincoln, conning the lesson taught by the voice of history, continued to practise the precept,

> "Saying, What is excellent,
> As God lives, is permanent."

[39] Alex. K. McClure, *Lincoln and Men of War Times*, p. 295.

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